SERMONS

Preached in a Religious House.

BY THE LATE

REV. J. M. NEALE, D.D.,

FOUNDER AND FIRST CHAPLAIN OF S. MARGARET'S, EAST GRINSTED.

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TO

MOTHER ANN,

FIRST SUPERIOR OF S. MARGARET'S SISTERHOOD,

DURING WHOSE NINE YEARS' RULE

ALL THE FOLLOWING SERMONS WERE PREACHED,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

BY HER COMMUNITY.

14.529

PREFATORY NOTE.

In consequence of the death of the Rev. J. Haskoll, the Editorship of Dr. Neale's posthumous works has devolved on the Sisters of S. Margaret's, and they are therefore responsible for the present volumes, which contain a series of Sermons for the second half of the ecclesiastical year. As many of these were left undated, it has not been possible in all cases to find Sermons originally intended for each day; but this will occasion little or no practical inconvenience.

It may be considered that too many personal and local allusions have been retained, and perhaps such is the case; but the reason is twofold. In the first place, this was Dr. Neale's own practice in the Sermons published by himself, as he considered that such references imparted

fresh life and reality to the discourses in which they occurred. And secondly, it seems probable that these indications of difficulties and vicissitudes passed through in the early days of this House, may be useful and interesting both now, and perhaps still more so hereafter, to those similarly engaged, or occupied in studying the history of the revival of Religious Life in England. Had the Editors consulted their own wishes, all such allusions would have been withdrawn.

S. Margaret's, East Grinsted,
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, 1874.

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SERMON I.[1]

Easter Eve.

SURSUM CORDA.

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."—S. Luke xv. 24.

And therefore yesterday we watched Him going down to the Valley of the Shadow of Death: and therefore now we worship Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. Now is the reed of scorn changed into the golden sceptre of mercy; —now is the crown of thorns transfigured into the diadem of the victory;—now is the band of blasphemers on Mount Calvary exchanged for the adoration of the twelve legions of angels;— now is Pilate's title, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, lost in the voice of the Father Himself, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." "Now," as S. Augustine says, (and they affirm, and I do not wonder at it, that the words came to him by inspiration,)

[1] Preached at S. Margaret's in 1857.

"now the angelic hosts may exult, now the earth may array itself in the splendour of its King: now Holy Church may be glad and exult for ever. These are the Paschal Feasts, in which that True Lamb was slain, by Whose Blood the door-posts of the faithful are hallowed. This is that night which caused the children of Israel to pass dryshod through the Red Sea. This is that night which illuminates the darkness of sins by the fiery pillar of cloud. This is that night wherein, having burst the bars of death, CHRIST ascended Victor from the grave. His Birth would have profited us nought, unless His Redemption had sealed what His Birth obtained. O inestimable Love of GOD! to deliver the slave, He gave the SON! O sin of Adam, certainly necessary, thus destroyed by the Death of CHRIST! O happy crime, which found such and so mighty a Redeemer! O truly blessed night, which alone merited to know the time and the hour in which CHRIST rose from the dead! This is the night of which it is written: 'Then shall my night be turned into day.' This is the night that puts sin to flight, washes out crime, restores innocence to the fallen and joy to the sorrowful: this is the night that spoiled the Egyptians, and brought out the Hebrews: this is the night in which earth is joined to Heaven, divinity to humanity."

I congratulate you, dearest Sisters, I congratulate myself, that we have thus been permitted to enter into the Joy of our LORD. And if the octave of that Joy finds us,—as it will find us,—scattered in different places, employed in different works, what then? The Resurrection itself was the beginning of the dispersion of the Apostles. Thenceforth they no more walked together through Galilee,—no more followed their Master in wilderness and over mountain, by the seaside, and across the lake, in a company: gradually they were all dispersed, labouring indeed more blessedly, but labouring more solitarily: living alone, and for the most part dying alone, till they entered into the Kingdom of their LORD together.

"This My Son was lost, and is found." Oh what a void as never void was,—what a loss as never loss was,—must that Sabbath Day that was an high day have been, to the eleven, and to the Virgin Mother, and to the holy women that were of their company! Lost indeed! Although, as the Antiphon told us last night, His abode was made in peace, and His habitation in the hill of Sion, yet into that abode they could not follow Him, that habitation they could not behold: what He did they knew not then, though they might know thereafter. And then, the suddenness of the whole! So sudden, that it is

difficult even now for us to realise that the last half of S. John's Gospel, down to the last chapter, contains the history of only eight days: that seven of the longest chapters of S. Matthew treat of but the same time: that the death of Lazarus happened on the Tuesday, and the Resurrection only on the Sunday week: a week of wonders truly, such as the world never saw at any other time.

"And they began to be merry." And so you approach to your Easter Communion. That ought to be, as you know, all of you, the solemn renewal of whatever resolutions you have heretofore made: ought to be the brightest and happiest time of your receiving the Flesh and Blood of the Spotless Lamb: when, after your Lent penitence, and your Lent confessions, you endeavour to rise still higher in the love, and to run more readily in the strength of that LORD, Who sank so low, Who endured such weakness for you. "This My SON was lost, and is found." It must be true of you, in your degree, as it was of Him. More and more you must be dead to this world: more and more you must count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge that lies before you, if you would walk worthy of this vocation, if you would keep this Easter, and all your Easters, as Sisters ought to do.

"Was dead and is alive again!" And how wonderful it is that the very resurrection of the year is typical, as these flowers and leaves bear witness, of the Resurrection of our LORD! It is as if that LORD would set His stamp on nature in this world, lowered, and defiled, and polluted as it is by sin: as if He would say, in the same way as He said of old, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, My people will not consider,"—that, let man keep this Easter or not, the rest of creation shall keep it: "O all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the LORD: praise Him and magnify Him for ever." —"I tell you," as He Himself, then the triumphant King on earth, now the triumphant King in Heaven, said only last Sunday,—"I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the very stones should immediately cry out."

And now, lift up your hearts and thoughts to that dear and risen LORD Whom yesterday you saw laid in the grave. You ought to do so at least as really; for that time of His affliction was borne once that it might be over for ever: but the time of His glory is as actual now as on that first Easter Day. If ye then be risen with CHRIST, seek those things that are above. If by a rougher way than others—He sought those things that were above, by Calvary: if by more

self-denial than others—He went to those things that were above, by the Cross. He promises no one—least of all would He promise you—to gain them easily: herein, as His own beloved Apostle says, is the patience and faith of the Saints.

He has gone before you to the true mountain in Galilee, where He wills that you should follow Him: where, as He left it to the Angels then, so now He leaves it to us to bid you follow Him: the mountain, whither, as the prophet bears witness, He has ascended that He might make to us a feast of fat things: the mountain in which He will destroy the covering spread over all people, and the veil that is cast over all nations: the mountain in which He Who this day destroyed death by death, and mastered Satan with his own sword, will fully, finally, gloriously, swallow up death in victory.

And now, &c.

SERMON II.[1]

Easter Eve.

THE HEALING OF THE BELOVED SERVANT.

"And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."—S. Luke vii. 10.

YES: that Servant, our Servant, the good and faithful Servant of the FATHER as well as of us, is now made whole indeed. So made whole that sickness, and pain, and grief, and death itself have no power over Him. Sick He was, sick to the death on Friday: surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sicknesses: and yet of Him that was not fulfilled, "The LORD comfort him when he lieth sick upon his bed: make Thou all his bed in his sickness." Sick He was,—with the hard plank of the Cross for His only resting-place: the myrrh mingled with wine,—the vinegar and gall, His only beverage,—the crown of thorns His only pillow.

[1] 1861; at the first Vespers of the Festival.

So He was;—and what is He now? O glorious privilege of this most glorious day! Thus to turn the quivering limbs, and the racked nerves, and the distorted muscles, into perfect beauty, perfect peace, perfect health! The grey shadow of death has passed over that most dear Face, as it will some day, my Sisters, pass over each of yours,—but so passed over, as also to have passed away. Those Five Wounds, yesterday bleeding and lacerated, and ragged from the nails and the spear, are now the bright stars of the conqueror's wreath,—are now the new constellation by which our faith steers her course over the dark waves of this world. Yes;—and even that, the hard and cruel bed, is now changed into the tenderest of resting-places. How many an aching heart will there repose! how many a broken heart will there be consoled! His Agony has hallowed it into our rest: His Death into our life. The Title set over it is, O wonderful contrast!—the Good Servant, on the one side,—the King of the Jews, on the other.

"They found the servant whole that had been sick." Therefore our gladness this evening: therefore Holy Church from East to West, is assuming, after her long sorrow, the garments of her beauty: therefore the flowers which tell of the resurrection of the year, come hither to tell us of the Resurrection of mortality. Therefore

> "On this our bright and Paschal Day
> The sun shines forth with purer ray:"

and with their rising LORD all things rise and rejoice.

"They found."—But who did? And first, surely, that most blessed penitent, the woman that had been a sinner, she out of whom seven devils were cast: the first to lead the long band of penitents into the courts of the LORD, the wonderful contrast to the spotless Mother of GOD. As of old time the cherubim figured near the ark bent over it as desiring to search into the mysteries there, so she beheld, in this new ark, and at this still more Divine Mystery, the two angels that sate, the one at the Head, and the other at the Feet, where the Body of JESUS had lain. They too, the Apostles, who mystically represent the Jewish and the Gentile Churches: Peter, that came last, first going into the sepulchre, and understanding the mystery: John, arriving first, but, like the Jewish people, remaining without. Yet, as it is written that, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in, then also all Israel shall be saved, so also it is said, that when Peter had arrived and gone in to the tomb, then went also that other disciple in, and he saw, and believed.

But are they all? GOD forbid! To that blessed company now, dear Sisters, join your-

selves. This is your task now, to return to the House. What House? Surely your native Home; the House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. To send your love, and hope, and thought there, your dearest love, your fondest hope, your warmest thought;—as for so many weeks you have been looking, first at your own infirmities and sins, for the sake of which He was afflicted;—and then have watched by the deathbed of that Servant, (as it is written, "a certain centurion's servant,"—and what is every Priest, and what is every Sister, but a centurion and leader in the band of those whose task this is, to destroy the works of the devil? "a certain centurion's servant, that was dear unto him, was sick and ready to die,") so now you have to find the Servant whole that had been sick.

"They that had been sent." And does not that, my Sisters, apply to you? To whom are you sent? or rather, To whom are you not sent? What one trouble, what one infirmity, what sorrow of heart or body is there to which your mission is not? Sent first of all into this world, in common with all His other servants, to fight the good fight of faith,—to lay hold on eternal life:—sent, in the second place, and in a meaning peculiar to yourselves, sent to do the same service for Him that He did for His FATHER when on earth.

And what follows then? but, that as it was with Him, so some day, in GOD's good time, will it be with you. "They that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick." As GOD calls each of you, will not your surviving Sisters see their fellow-servants that had been sick,—sick with many sins,—sick with much infirmity,—sick with the sickness that is to separate for a while, soul and body, shall they not see you made whole! Oh, happy likeness to that dear LORD, though not so speedy a recovery as His! He, in that most holy tomb during the Still Hours, the Great Forty Hours—and then trampling down death by death;—you, for years or centuries, in that grave which is His also, as it is written, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof:" but at the end of that time—and end it shall—arising perfectly whole: never to sin, never to sorrow, never to suffer again?

And now, lastly, "they *found* the servant whole that had been sick." GOD grant, my Sisters, that it may be so with you! He indeed is made whole; but how many, at this most holy season, find Him not! It is not so easy a thing. Even in that sense we may take the words, "If *by any means* I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead." But if you have sorrowed with Him, if you have passed through the darkness with Him,

now rejoice with Him,—now in His Light shall you see light! And He give you all such an Easter joy, such an Easter Communion, as may, after your Lent fasts, and your Lent confessions, be a dear and true type of the eternal Easter of Heaven, of—

> "The song of them that triumph,
> The shout of them that feast,
> When who, beneath their Leader,
> Have conquered in the fight,
> For ever and for ever
> Are clad in robes of white!"

And now, &c.

SERMON III.[1]

Easter Eve.

THE GREAT PASSOVER.

"And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept."—2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

GREAT joy which shall be to all people. But what joy, my Sisters, to you! Now, no more of the lingering woe of Mount Calvary: now, no more the anxious expectation, the fixed, intent hanging, to catch every word of that dear tongue, before it shall be silent in death. Now, no more of watching that face, so marred and defiled with the spittings of the rabble, and the drops from the Crown of Thorns, but every moment getting the greyness of approaching death. No: old things past away: all things new. No: the tears wiped from the King's Face for ever: the token and earnest that some day they shall be wiped from the servant's face also. No: Mary Magdalene is not now at the Cross, but by the Sepulchre: yea rather, by that

[1] 1859.

which was a sepulchre—but is now a House of Life.

And where are your hearts, and love, and hopes, and desires? Where?—but in that Home which He has gained for you? Where?—but according to His own dear desire, that where He is, there you may be also? Where?—but in that land where Alleluia is always sung? You remember how, six weeks ago, we bade it good speed in the Name of the LORD? how we said that the angels would guard it, till it should return to us again? That time has come. Alleluia, like some dear and bright friend, has returned to us: we shall speak of it now, according to that in the Law, when we lie down, and when we rise up. What is there short of Heaven, which can compare with this Easter joy? You, my Sisters,—there is the happiness of so being of one mind and one soul as we are,—you, my Sisters, do not need me to prove to you your happiness. You do not require me to set before you the arguments of our LORD's Resurrection. To us it is a present joy, a thing of to-day; a blessing which GOD is to be thanked for, not that we are to be taught. O LORD JESUS, we know that Thou hast now burst the bars of death. We know that the seal is broken, the watch has fled: we know that the chief priests are paying their money to the soldiers:

"say ye, His disciples came." Fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Fools, not to consider that they were but making more manifest the hand of GOD against themselves! The napkin for the Head, folded and laid by itself,—the grave-clothes folded and laid by themselves: like the hurry of midnight thieves indeed! like the fear and trepidation of felons in danger of their lives! But *any* lie, rather than GOD's Truth: any incredible legend, rather than the Resurrection.

The Lamb that stood mute before His shearers yesterday,—how is He now the Lion of the tribe of Judah! the victorious Lion, Whose voice fills the wilderness of the world!

Yes: never was such a Passover as this. Signs, shadows, types disappearing, the very truth manifested. That Passover, when Israel crossed the Red Sea,—when Pharaoh, his chariots and his horses thundered behind, and the stormy waters were in front? But what then was Pharaoh to the hosts of evil spirits that follow hard after us? what the Red Sea to that abyss of natural corruption which Baptism frees us from? That Passover which they held in the plain of Jericho? when the manna failed, and they did eat of the old corn? But then their wars were beginning: then the seven nations lay before them unconquered, and all the towns

walled to heaven, all the giants, all the seed of the Anakim had to be met. We read of the book of the LORD's Wars. That book to-day is finished. That book has its end in the Palm of the Resurrection.

Often have I preached to you, and to others on this First Vespers of Easter. But never yet have I, never could I, deliver, as it were, a regular sermon on the Festival. The Joy goes too much to our heart; the change is so visibly great; it seems as if we ourselves had passed from death to life. I could as soon imagine a soldier delivering a set oration to his fellow-warriors immediately after some great victory. I could as easily fancy a prisoner addressing his fellow-prisoners in good set terms after their deliverance from bondage. But, this, dearest Sisters, this at least, I must remind you,—you must come pure to the Feast of Feasts. Every one of you has had the burden of sins removed, and is absolutely and entirely forgiven. Now then, let your whole Easter life be in accordance with that. Now then, let your risen LORD help you still more; let the virtue of the Resurrection shed forth around us higher efficiency. What is there that you may not become? What is there to which you may not aspire? What victory is impossible to you?

And now, &c.

SERMON IV.[1]

Easter Day.

THE GLORIOUS APPAREL.

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head." Zech. iii. 3, 4, 5.

It is a strange feeling, this passing from winter to spring, from darkness to light, from death to life: from Lent gloom to Easter gladness. Alleluia has come back to us. Now it is time for redeemed earth to put on her robe of April gladness: now it is meet that the trees of the wood should, by their green leaflets, acknowledge the victory of the Tree of Life—offer their oblations to Him That reigned from the Tree.

Yes, it is a marvellous change: from the crowds on Calvary, to Mary in the quiet garden;

[1] 1863.

from the LORD, dragged in the night from Gethsemane, to the same LORD going in to tarry the night at Emmaus. Now we have those mysterious appearances and disappearances that speak of the spirit-world: now we learn something of what the glorified body will become:—the entrance through closed doors; the vanishing out of the sight of the disciples; and yet the verity of real scars,—and yet the truth of real sustenance. There is a sublime mystery in these Great Forty Days, that the greatest Saints seem overwhelmed in contemplating. Where did the Victor go, when He was not with His Apostles? Not as yet, not quite as yet, was He to return Home; and of a surety, He Whose whole earthly life had been one long labour, would not now, in the first glory of His Triumph, cease from work. He That had the work of our redemption till He said, "It is finished;" He That has the work of intercession from the time of His Ascension, what was His especial work in the happy, calm, and yet glorious days between the two? Ah, my Sisters, that, it will be one of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven to learn. Whether He visited the Old Testament Saints, free indeed now from the terror and shadow of death, but not as yet—for that could only be when the everlasting doors were lifted up—admitted into Paradise: or whether He still continued His

midnight prayers on the mountains,—or whether He in an unknown form went about healing the sick of Judæa, or of far-off countries, who can tell us? But this we know: how in the Forty Days He laid the whole foundation of His Church: how then He taught of the threefold ministry, of Confirmation, of the propitiatory Sacrifice of the Most Holy Sacrament, of the initerability of Baptism, and multitudes of other doctrines or acts of which as yet He had not spoken, or had not spoken so distinctly.

And long before, as you just now heard, our great High Priest in His Resurrection Body had been prefigured. "Jesus was clothed in filthy garments." He was indeed, when thirty-three years before, He assumed our nature, our fallen nature so far as its infirmity, unfallen so far as its sins. It is very touching to me to see how those whose faith is not built on the Rock of the Church, in their strong and dear grasp of one truth, fall into heresy by ignoring its opposite verity. In one of the greatest and saddest lives of this century, Edward Irving's, is a memorable example: and that with respect to our very subject. He clung with his whole soul to our dear LORD's sympathy: he yearned that others should feel how the Man of Sorrows was in all points tempted like as we are: he would have died for His very and real brotherhood with man: and

therefore he affirmed that the Spotless One took upon Him fallen human nature, with the possibility of sin, though, by the Omnipotence of the Word, sin never for one moment tainted that perfect nature. We all, at once, shrink from that. But remember, my Sisters, it is at least as dangerous an error—and I am afraid a very common one—which does not venture to believe that our LORD's temptations were real; rather regarding them as something which to others would have been temptations, and which He therefore went through the form of bearing, but which to Him were none. Believe that: and that dear sympathy is lost, not in bodily pain, but in temptation. We lose S. Paul's strong consolation, "In that He Himself hath *suffered*" —and notice how strong is the expression—"hath *suffered*, being tempted." At the same time, my Sisters, if ever in teaching the poor, or children, you dwell on this, freely confess, that how the two things can coexist—the LORD's unfallen nature, and the reality of His temptations—human intellect is unable to comprehend. Both are true: both are equally true: but how, we can only learn in that place where we shall know even as also we are known.

"Jesus was clothed in filthy garments." It is well said. For those garments of our humanity were, when He assumed them, corruptible.

As He had remained long enough in the grave, they were preserved from any change, not by their own inherent nature, but by the special virtue of the HOLY SPIRIT. "Thou shalt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption."

And they were exposed, too, to all the wants and necessities, and pains, and meannesses of poor mortality. We need not now go into those inmost shrines of the Mystery of the Incarnation, into which the great Doctors of the middle ages pressed with a holy boldness; this is enough for us: that Jesus was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. But *our* JESUS went even lower in humiliation. He, in the Hour of His Agony, knelt before an angel: knelt, in the vehemence of that petition, all the more marvellous, because unheard by the FATHER: knelt, and was comforted by an angel. Marvellous contrast, between the garden of Gethsemane, where the Eternal SON knelt, and the angel stood by and comforted: and the mines of Patmos, where the Beloved Apostle would have knelt, and was forbidden by the angel: "See thou do it not."

"Take away the filthy garments from him." So it was said, at that moment when there was the great earthquake, and the stone was rolled from the cave, and the LORD Who, without loosing the portals of virginity, had come into

His mortal, now burst the bars of iron to enter on His immortal, life.

"Take away the filthy garments from him." That Body is now immortal, now impassible, now endued with the four glorious attributes of a spiritual Body—that Body now only waiting for its exaltation above the choirs of the angels, above Cherubim and Seraphim, to a coequality with the Throne of the FATHER Himself. And as it has been said, there is surely no thought more marvellous than this,—it seems to bring the next world so strangely near to us. Consider, how in some especial place, some fixed locality, even at this moment, that glorious Body now is: some local place to which, if we were carried by miracle, we should then, not by miracle, but with our natural eyes, behold it. CHRIST the Firstfruits:—afterwards they that are CHRIST's at His coming.

"And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head."

O LORD JESUS, Who of Thy servants would not say so? Who, remembering that other mitre,—that mitre, in itself, of scorn, of shame, of ignominy, of bitter agony, which Thou didst wear when Thou didst offer Thyself on the Cross, would not say, now that the conflict is to be changed for the triumph, "Let them set a *fair* mitre upon His Head."

"Let them:" let who? This is the answer, my Sisters; and it is an answer in which you are, more than others, deeply concerned. For whom did He wear that first mitre, He, the Priest of priests? for whom did He put on that helmet, the Warrior of warriors? If—as is most true—for all His Church, was it not in a nearer and dearer sense for those who are trying to walk the most closely to Him, who are resolved to give up most for Him? Then, if for you, more, in proportion, than for others, that first mitre of pain was worn, surely it is your place to bring, as you can, some jewel to adorn that second mitre of glory: of different gems, and of different value; whether, as those mediæval writers would have said, the sapphire of love for love's sake, where no external opportunity of displaying it is given: the ruby of life laid down for Him, or in a certain sense, exposed for Him: the chrysolite of a cloistered life of prayer; whatever its nature, and whencesoever brought, you, thinking of these gems, ought to say, and that with all your heart, "Let them set a fair mitre upon His Head."

And then, there is the lovely humility of the petition. "Let *them* set." The prophet did not venture to ask that *he* should set the crown on the High Priest's Head. So, each for all others, each feeling your own unworthiness, each feeling the poverty of the jewel you bring,

yet join in the common prayer: "'Let *them* set the crown upon His Head:' let me have but the privilege of adding one small gem, if it may be so, to it."

What will that crown be, when it is perfected? What will it be when that shall be accomplished of our true Solomon, that all His vessels are of gold: none of silver, it was nothing accounted of? That is known to Him alone, to Whom belong the riches, and the glory, and the strength, and the majesty.

But this is what belongs to you, my Sisters: the seeking goodly gems for Him. How do men seek the gems of this world? We know. Some are sought for in the poisonous atmosphere, which gradually wears out the health and strength of those who dig them forth from the unwholesome mine. And others there are which can only be obtained by all the perils of the diver's life. And others again, gained in the rough, without much trouble; which, to be worked into the perfect gem, shorten, in the long run, the life of those who are so employed. I might—for the type is most remarkable—make a much longer list of the dangers which attend the finding, or the preparing, jewels. I have given you three. Now work them out for yourselves. They answer, as it were, to the three spiritual dangers—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the

pride of life. The way in which the mediæval Doctors enter into the whole subject, is far too minute to be possible for me now to tell you, and perhaps, would not be so profitable for you to hear.

Only remember: the whole matter is summed up in that one text: "When the LORD maketh up His jewels." And, as S. Fulbert says, the jewels may indeed be made up, but there may be flaws in them. They reckon—which S. Fulbert certainly did not know—there may be, in stones, a hundred and eight different flaws, which have their separate names; and in pearls, the flaws are still more numerous, or rather innumerable.

As I have often reminded you, the Jewish law permitted a freewill offering to be imperfect. In almost all respects, as regards the commandments of GOD, the Law was a heavy yoke compared with the rule of the Church. But in one most remarkable point, the case is reversed. The offerings appointed or allowed to the Synagogue may be divided into two heads: those ordained, and those permitted. Of those ordained, let them be what they may—peace-offerings, burnt, sin, trespass, or thank-offerings—all must be perfect: "a male without blemish." But of those allowed—the freewill offerings—it is expressly ordained, *they* might have some fault.

"Either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted."

Notice the exception—for a *vow*. And who would now dare so to think of their freewill offerings? Which of you, dearest Sisters, but know, when once you have made it for good,—or, for the time that you have made it, if you have only, as yet, made it for a time,—that it is of the whole spirit, and soul, and body; that, if it were not, you might well expect to hear those dreadful words spoken to Ananias: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

And now, &c.

SERMON V.[1]

Easter Night.

THE WORSHIP OF THE UNKNOWN GOD.

"For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God."—Acts xvii. 23.

O BLESSED Altar, set up indeed on Good Friday, but glorified to-day! O happy Altar, then the scene of all misery, all agony, all fear: spot which witnessed the last throes, the concluding struggles of the Immaculate Lamb! now the resting-place, hope, joy, consolation, glory, of all Christians! An Altar indeed with this inscription, "To the Unknown GOD." For what! did not every single action show how, most unintentionally, most ignorantly, but still most really and truly, they adored Him Whom they crucified: they proclaimed Him King Whom they reckoned among the transgressors? To what other end the purple robe, the white raiment, the sceptre, the crown, the bowing the

[1] At the renewal of vows, 1857.

knee, the solemn proclamation, "Behold your King!" and after all, and crown of all, the title, "JESUS of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!"

Yes: this was the Altar of the Unknown GOD! As we stood by the Cross, my Sisters, as we watched patience have its perfect work, as we heard those seven last words, as we saw the greyness of death gather over that blessed face, the eyes glaze, the head droop, was it not the Unknown GOD? He Who thus suffered nevertheless was at that very moment, and in the depth of extremity of His Sufferings, was, according to His Divinity, at the right hand of the FATHER. He Who thus was a worm and no man, the very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people, was at that very moment the Joy of the Angels, the Blessedness of the Blessed! And that was the Altar which they raised Him: the Altar where He stretched forth His Hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people: the Altar, where, hanging between Heaven and earth, He reconciled the one to the other: where, made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men, He made that world His own Kingdom, He replaced the number of fallen angels, He raised man above their highest order, even to the very Throne of GOD.

On this Altar of the Unknown GOD, you, my Sisters, have long since resolved to sacrifice

yourselves. Your hands, like His, are nailed to it: your feet, like His, are fastened to it: on it, while you dwell in this world, you are continually to die to the world: from it, in the happy evening, you desire to be taken down, only that you may be laid up for ever in the cleft Rock of your salvation. Dearest Sisters, bless and thank GOD that it is so! Bless Him that your choice is not now to make! that already you can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His!" And call on Him, Who as this morning raised Himself to His glory, to raise you also to Him. Tell Him that you cannot be separated from Him. Say to Him what Ittai said to David, "In what place soever the King shall be, whether in life or death, there shall also Thy servant be." Ask Him, Who having loved His own in the world, loves them unto the end, to look down, not now from the place of unrighteous judgment, but from the Throne of merited glory, on you! to look, not on a denier and blasphemer, but on those who, while faint, weak, weary, nevertheless desire to be most true-hearted. For you, my Sisters, I would say to Him, "Now, O LORD JESUS, that Thou hast been made perfect by suffering, now that Thou hast no more to fear, no more to endure, no more shame, pain, misery to undergo; look on these Thy beloved ones, who are yet bearing

the burden and heat of the day. Thou hast entered into Thine Easter; they are still in the midst of their Lent: Thou, the morning being come, art standing on the shore: they are still tossed on the stormy and tumultuous waves of the sea of this world. Thou art at the right hand of the FATHER for them: Satan is still at their right hand to resist them. Turn then those loving and pitiful eyes upon them! not the less loving, not the less pitiful, because now they behold the happy bounds of Paradise, and the River of the Water of Life. Thou didst look Thine Apostle into penitence; look them into deeper love and stronger courage! They are Thine, O LORD: Thou hast a right to every power, thought, action: but have they not also a right to Thee? Thou gavest them Thyself, when Thou didst accept their offer. Leave them not to fight alone. Let them not be exiles from Thy care, let them not be orphans from Thy Love! bind them more closely to Thee every day, till Thou shalt unite them to Thyself in the ineffable closeness of Thine own country."

"I beheld an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown GOD." And how do we behold the form of that Altar now? First, as worn by yourselves: the outward and visible sign of your betrothal to Him. Then, set up here: the visible sign of our common work for Him; then, marking

the place where our dear Sister, who now serves Him as she would, served Him as she could. So even here, now, we have many a lesson from that most holy and most dear symbol. Your own inward, perpetual, invisible, taking up your Cross: the struggle in the deep recesses of your heart, of which, except yourself and the priest, who so far stands to you in the place of GOD, not a soul knows or will know. And then also we are reminded of the happy ending of such a bearing the Cross: of those blessed ones before GOD, who now rest from their labours; who having clung to that Tree, and loved it while it was the Tree of all sorrow and pain, cling to it not less, love it not less, now that it is indeed the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of GOD.

"As I passed by, and beheld your devotions." So, dearest Sisters, the world would say to you; and in one sense we may take this very title, "The Unknown GOD," as our greatest comfort. True it is, that the end and aim of your lives must be to know Him better, as well as to love Him more; yet nevertheless, remember what S. Paul says, "To know the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge." Yes, He is the Unknown GOD still! He always will be, in this world! Yes, and though continually less and less so, still, through all eternity, He will be unknown.

You little know what treasures of grace, love, help, there are for you, if only you will seek for them in Him. You little know how *very* present a help He is in time of trouble. You little know how He will return your poor little offerings of love, and with what increase. You little know how He desires, longs, yearns to help you in this your pilgrimage, how fully He sympathises with you in each of your difficulties. He knows them better than you do. "Thou," as David says, "Thou understandest my thoughts long before."

Having such a Bridegroom, my Sisters, where is your courage to be stayed? where is your love to find a limit? what are you to think difficult? what great mountain shall not, even at first sight, become a plain? The Altar of the Cross! it has derived ineffable virtues from the precious Body that hung on it: to you, offering yourselves on it, it will give of that virtue. Pray that your sacrifice may be counted with His, that as He died for you, you may die with Him: as He willingly and cheerfully offered Himself, do you also willingly and cheerfully offer yourselves. You have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how are you straitened till it be accomplished!

And now then, my Sisters, such of you as would now renew your last best offering, that beyond which you have nothing to offer, that

beyond which your love cannot go further, come and make your Easter oblation! He that was born of a Virgin Mother, He that lay in a Virgin Tomb, He that feedeth among the lilies, shall He not receive you now? Shall He not, from the height of His glory, look down on His often distressed, often trembling, but true-hearted Brides? Shall He not remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice? Shall He not grant you your hearts' desire, and fulfil all your mind? Your hearts' desire here—more and more faith, stronger and stronger hope, deeper and deeper love; all your mind there—the seeing Him as He is, in the Beatific Vision.

And now, &c.

SERMON VI.

Easter Monday.

THE BATTLE WITH AMALEK.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."—Exod. xvii. 12.

THERE is nothing so simple, even for the understanding of children, as this story, if you take it in the literal sense, as a lesson that men ought always to pray and not to faint; that those who can only intercede, may, in point of fact, be bearing the chief brunt of the Church's battle: nothing which speaks so clearly the words of the Apostle: "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." But then, when we come to pursue it into its mystical sense, what does it tell us then? Are we still to take Moses, as so generally, as a type of our dear LORD, according to His own saying, "A Prophet shall the LORD your GOD raise up unto

you of your brethren, like unto me?" And who are these then that supported the LORD's arms, when they were ready to sink? Who was the Aaron, and who was the Hur, that stood by the Hill of Crucifixion, as the two Saints of old on the mount over the battle with the Amalekites?

Yes, indeed we may still carry out the type of our LORD. Never let us be afraid of seeing Him everywhere. In the sad story of David and Bathsheba, David, as you know very well, is a type of One that did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. So in Samson's sin at Gaza, when he lay till morning, and then went away with the door-posts, have we not a glorious type of our LORD's Resurrection, when He burst the bars of death, because it was not possible He should be holden of them? So here. But first see why the Amalekites, above all other of the enemies of the Israelites, were a type of our own enemies, the evil spirits who continually seek to harm us. The Amalekites, as we read, not here, but in Deuteronomy, cut off the hindmost of the children of Israel in their passage through the wilderness of Sin. These hindmost were they, who from any ceremonial uncleanness were for a while shut out from the camp. Is not that, my Sisters, a marvellous type of the way in which Satan knows how to fix on—I had almost said to *pounce* on—all our infirmities,

mental or bodily, and so turn them to our ruin?

But now come to the time of the great battle with Amalek. That long weary battle which the Church of GOD has to carry on to the end of the world, long after our true Moses has ascended into Heaven, was there fought in one day; and while Moses was still on that which to him was the Mount of Pain. He did keep his hands raised till the end of the day: but it was as much as he could do. So our dear LORD, when entering on that conflict, said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He too withdrew not His Blessed arms from stretching them out on the Cross, till He had accomplished the salvation of the world; but yet, to say it with all reverence, and according to His Humanity only, *as* His Day was, *so* was His Strength; but not greater than His Day.

And what were these two who supported Him in the hour of His need? Not His disciples: they all forsook Him and fled. Not even His Blessed Mother, or that happy penitent: for with the sword piercing through their own soul, what help could they give His? And first see who Aaron and Hur were. When Moses afterwards went up to Mount Sinai, he left them in charge of the people during his absence; Aaron, as the representative of the

Priestly, and Hur, of the Kingly Power; and so they are here. For look at our dear LORD as He hangs on the Cross in either of those two characters: how much there was to point Him out the great High Priest—how much, as the everlasting King. The great High Priest, when at the hour of the evening sacrifice He was stretching forth His Hands as the evening sacrifice of the whole world. How at the time of killing the Paschal Lamb, He, the Paschal offering, was hanging in the agonies of death: how the veil of the Temple was rent in twain at the moment in which His most precious Soul departed from His most blessed Body. And then, the Everlasting King: for they had bowed the knee before Him, with "Hail! King of the Jews:" they had set that over His Head as His accusation written, "JESUS of Nazareth, the King of the Jews:" they had put the sceptre in His Hand and the crown on His Royal Forehead. These signs then that His work was being accomplished were, as those holy men say who have written on Exodus, the Aaron and the Hur who stayed up our LORD's Hands till the going down of the sun. Here, as High Priest, He saw the countless multitude of souls —souls that had passed into rest, souls then in their state of trial, souls not yet born into the world,—whose salvation depended upon this,

that, after having stretched forth His Hand on the Cross, He should not withdraw it again till all was over. There, as King, He saw the thousand times ten thousand who should hereafter fight for the extension of His Kingdom, who for His Name's sake and for the joy set before them should be stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, of whom the world was not worthy. And seeing these things, how could His Arms but be steadied for us? How for that precious pearl of human salvation which His love to us led Him so ardently to desire, how for that Kingdom which was to be from one sea to the other, from the sea of Baptism to the sea of glass that is before the throne, could He but endure the Cross, despising the shame? And at last the evening came on. At last, after the miraculous darkness, the sun—now far down in the west, once more shone forth,—and then too came the "It is finished."

Well: and in this battle against the Amalekites, who ought to be more earnestly and lovingly on His side than you, dear Sisters? O how hard enemies they are to you! how, hating your work, abhorring your service, fearing your example, they desire to have you that they may sift you as wheat! And then comes in that command in the Canticles, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon

with the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him." Go forth—but to what? Why, each of you to your own labour, whatever it be: to your own battle, whatever it be. For while He so stretches forth His nailed and pierced Hands, you must be invincible. Never fear that He can relax His efforts: all your fear should be that you lose sight of Him. You have, to a certain extent, chosen this battle yourselves: He invited you, I know, to it, but He did not command you: and therein, if your greater privilege, is your greater danger too.

But see, how much happier is the antitype than the type. Moses was on the hill unable to give any physical assistance to his dear people: praying for them, but leaving them to fight for themselves. But our dear LORD is not only your Moses on the mountain: He is also your Joshua in the valley. "When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them." What hard work have any of you ever undertaken, but there He was with you too? The more or the less you saw of Him, the more or the less you felt Him nigh, the greater or less was your faith. His left hand was always ready to be under your head, His right hand always ready to embrace you; and times have been, I know it, when He has enabled you to realize all this: to feel that, whatever locality you were in, "This is none

other than the House of GOD, and this is the gate of Heaven." Not always; not perhaps often; but then the fault lies in you, not in Him.

Well, and now once more, see in that Cross all that you can need. I know you try; I know you believe; but trying must be no light trying with you; belief must be no weak faith. "His hands were steady till the going down of the sun." What is that but the type of the greatest and last of graces—final perseverance? that grace which, if our LORD gives not, no other can avail; that grace which you must have unless you have lost earth without gaining Heaven; that grace which, once granted, and you must be, each of you, among those that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

And now, &c.

SERMON VII.[1]

Low Sunday.

THE TWO GIFTS OF PEACE.

"The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came JESUS and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."—S. John xx. 19.

CAN we not imagine the quietness and beauty of that night? Still the Easter moon, but rising later now, for it is three days past the full: the city still in its Passover tranquillity: for the great feast lasted, as you know, eight days. Nothing now remaining on Mount Calvary to mark the spot where, three days since, the world was redeemed: except the long line of fresh earth thrown up, which shows where the crosses, as the manner of the Romans was, had been buried.

The LORD was about to come. And to what end? To give His Apostles His peace: to show them His Hands and His Side; to endue

[1] Evening. 1857.

them with the HOLY GHOST. And what was the condition, so to speak, on which He thus manifested Himself to them? The doors were shut, for fear of the Jews. "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." So He had spoken long before by His prophet: and here, well and faithfully, His little band fulfilled His saying. Ten poor men on the one side: the world on the other. Ten poor men, of whom only one had stood firm; ten, that had to bewail the treachery of one out of their number, and the denial of their Master by him who was chief among their brotherhood. Everywhere discouragement, persecution, distress, danger: the LORD risen indeed, yet they scarcely believed it: risen indeed, but at all events not with them. Was that the time and the place to expect so great a joy? to receive the blessings won on Calvary by the Death of GOD?

"The doors were shut." Dearest Sisters, these three blessings, peace, love, pardon, that same dear LORD is as ready to bestow on you: but then it must be on the same condition. I have shown you before how, when the Bride rose, and went about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways sought for Him Whom her soul loved, she sought Him, but she found Him

not; and then again how when at last she had discovered Him, she held Him fast and would not let Him go, until she had brought Him into her own house, and into her own room, and then lastly, how tenderly and lovingly, and in what solitude and stillness, she cherished this bundle of myrrh that was so infinitely precious to her. The very shutting out others shall bring Him in: even as then, the doors that kept off the Jews only united Him more closely to His own dear little band of followers. And what marvel that He, Who when He came into the world, came from a Mother, a spotless Virgin after His Birth as before it, should now come, at His Second Birth, as it were, among His disciples, through the closed doors through which none other, save He, might pass? "When the doors were shut," then came JESUS. Close them then, dear Sisters, to all things of this world: your part and lot is with a higher: you are citizens of Sion, not of Babylon; you are inheritors with your own beloved LORD, not fellow-inhabitants with His enemies here. "My soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace:—I labour for peace." Is that your saying as well as David's? Why, then, here you have it. It is what He comes to bestow. "JESUS stood in the midst of them and saith, Peace be unto you!"

Ah! and it is well, as holy men have often enough observed, that it is written, He *said*,—not, He *answered*. That peace must come, solely and entirely, from Himself,—never in the first place from us; it must be a saying, not an answer; He must bestow it of His grace, not because we have done anything to deserve it. "Peace be unto you." Yes, Peter need not now doubt of his forgiveness: they that had all forsaken Him and fled may be satisfied that though they rejected Him, He has not rejected them: just as when He so comes now among you, every doubting, fearful, trembling soul may see the golden sceptre stretched forth, and may hear those most joyful words, "What wilt thou, Esther, and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom." But peace to the Apostles, with such a sea of troubles as lay before them! Peace, when they were just about to go forth to war with the world! Peace, when that banner of the Cross was about to be unfurled from this very land to China, from north to furthest south, and everywhere to be met with insult and mocking and a hard contest,—and everywhere to make good the saying of Him that hung thereon, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." Yes, indeed! Once, in one of the gorges of the French Alps, I passed the

waterfall of a little torrent that rushed through a narrow gulley of rock into the abyss below, throwing up a cloud of spray, and uttering its thunder ceaselessly. Nothing more restless, nothing more hurried, nothing more turbulent. But across the very centre of the chasm, an oak had flung one long arm ; and in this branch a wild pigeon had made her nest. Rocked by the wind, moistened by the spray, there nevertheless it hung in security, peaceful amidst all the roar and confusion of the fall, safe where below it was a fearful abyss. And not only so, but the spray, touched by the sun, formed a rainbow, the sign of heavenly grace, round this quiet nest. Dear Sisters, the waterfall you must have : the nest you may have if you will : "How often would I have gathered My children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." And you may have that Heavenly Rainbow of perfect peace, which the grace of the Holy Ghost can raise for you on—or rather, make for you out of—the spray and confusion of this world.

"And when He had so said, He showed unto them His Hands and His Side." First He told them of the purchase : then He showed them the price of it. Peace won by agony : freedom by the nails that fettered Him to the Cross. He had told them of His legacy but three nights be-

fore: "Peace I leave you: My peace I give unto you:" but then they knew not the sorrows and miseries by which that legacy was to be acquired. Now their understandings were opened to this also: they saw those Wounds which are the pole-stars of all our hope, they saw those wounds which are the anchoring places of all our faith. "They that are delivered," says Deborah, "from the noise of the archers at the places of drawing water." That was the Well indeed, the Well of love and pity, the Well of life and strength, that riven Side of our LORD. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Yes: and it is an Easter sight for you still, dear Sisters. I do not call upon you to look on Him now, as I did on Friday week, when the nails were still in those Hands and Feet, and that Side was still flowing with the Blood and Water of its newly inflicted wounds. But I ask you now to look at Him in His glory, and then you will still see those Wounds, as Habakkuk tells you: "His Brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His Hand, and there was the hiding of His Power:" they are those by which He remembers you now that He has entered into His Kingdom: they are those which He stretches forth to the FATHER on your behalf: they are those also to which He desires that you yourselves should be likened. Those hands of

yours, dear Sisters, are in like manner to be hallowed to Him. His were pierced with nails for you, that yours might be ready to undertake any painful task for Him: His Feet were transfixed for you, that you might be eager to tread any difficult road for Him. Look to those Wounds then, still, but as sources of comfort now, not of sorrow: look to them as a soldier would to his ensign, as a stranger in a strange land to the flag of his country.

For it proceeds: "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD." And how beautifully that is said! They had not seen the LORD till they had seen the print of the nails. It was those marks only which made them recognise Him,—and you can look for none so secure, or so comforting. *Then* were the disciples glad: they had seen them inflicted with agony, now they saw them manifested with joy: "ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

But what is this? "JESUS said unto them *again*, Peace be unto you." What! is that peace so passing, so insecure, so momentary, that it needs to be repeated again? Not so. But He spake of two kinds of peace: both His: both ready for His people: but not both equally unbroken, or equally lasting. The first time

He spoke of peace in this world; of the calm amidst the storm; of the children of Israel that had light in all their dwellings, while the Egyptians were involved in their three days' darkness; of the palm-trees and wells of Elim, where His congregation were encamped, while all around them was waste, howling wilderness. But now He speaks of that more blessed and everlasting peace, only to be found in the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is by interpretation, the Vision of Peace. And it is well written, "JESUS said to them *again*, Peace be unto you." For we must have had His peace here before we can have it hereafter. The dove must have made her nest in the spray of the waterfall, before—as He says in the Canticles—she can take up her abode in the clefts of the Everlasting Rock. "For your shame ye shall have double," says the prophet: "and for your confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them." So, after that tremendous conflict on Mount Calvary, double peace in the large upper room on Mount Sion: peace here, peace hereafter: the peace of exiles, and the peace of fellow-citizens.

"As My FATHER hath sent Me, even so send I you." I need not tell you, my dear Sisters, *to* what the Only-Begotten SON was sent. To

the same things He now sends you: and that, too, after He has just bestowed His peace. It is as if He would show that the two depend one on another. If you go forth to your battle as He went to His, if you take up your cross as He took His, if you do every the least action to His Glory, as He did to the FATHER'S, if you are bent on overcoming, as He overcame, then indeed you shall have that peace which passeth all understanding. But on no other terms is it to be come by. You cannot have peace from the world, and that peace also. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer:" and you may well be of good cheer, when you think of the night of that first Easter Day, when you see the glorified LORD, Him to Whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, still not ashamed to call His disciples brethren, still condescending to eat with them, to show them His Wounds, to bid them handle Him, to argue so lovingly with them that a spirit hath not flesh and bones as they saw Him have.

In one respect, indeed, the servant is not such as his Master was. We must say, like S. Paul, "Not knowing the things which shall befall me there, save that the HOLY GHOST witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me:" but He knew all things that should come upon Him,—every detail of His suffering,—every ag-

gravation of His anguish. He knew it all,—and yet He went forth.

And now He gives to His Apostles that power which before He had only promised them. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The two most precious of His gifts,—He gave one in the same night in which He was betrayed, the other, in the same night in which He arose. *Thus* the power of the Keys was purchased. Thus hope and comfort and absolution have been breathed to many and many a burdened and trembling soul. He that once said, "Lazarus, come forth!" daily calls myriads, by this means, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. He that said, "Loose him, and let him go," now says to His priests, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." Such a gift cost Him the Passion and the Cross. Think therefore, dearest Sisters, when you kneel by me here, how He knelt in His Agony in the Garden that you might rise again absolved and made whole: think, when He, by my lips, sets you free and unbinds you from the chain of your sins, how, that He might obtain this grace for you, He was sent bound to Caiaphas and Pilate: how, to raise you up after your many falls,

He Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, fell beneath the Cross. Oh, how ought we to treat such a Sacrament,—how holily, how earnestly, how reverently, I in administering it, you in receiving it, when it was thus bought by the Blood and Agony of our King!

"He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HOLY GHOST." As David had said long before, "When Thou lettest Thy breath go forth they shall be made, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth." Yes: from that room where the Apostles were then met in secret for fear of the Jews, from that room with the closed doors, from that room where the dear and glorious form of Him that was sacrificed for the world was first handled by His Apostles, went forth that breath which has quickened so many dry bones, which, like a breeze of the eternal summer, has caused so many desolate and waste places to blossom abundantly: those sounds which have gone out into all lands, those words which have reached to the ends of the world, which you have all so often heard here, these words which indeed are joy and peace. "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" And the answer is,—"I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Oh, what a comforting thing it is, solely and simply

to believe His words,—not to perplex ourselves with the why and the how,—but to know and be sure that from a miserable and sinful priest that same gift may now be bestowed on you which the LORD of Holiness and Glory gave then! "What *could* have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

And oh, my dearest Sisters, that that same risen LORD, through this your Easter joy, may still vouchsafe to show you His Hands and His Side! may still give you the desire of suffering with Him here, that so you may reign with Him hereafter! A Sister's life, in one sense, must always be a Lent: but, if He gives you His Easter blessing, you are ready to share, so far as you can, His sufferings,—is it not so?—and to drink of His cup.

And some day, in His infinite mercy, one clause of this story may be yours in another sense. When that terrible Jordan has been passed, when you have returned to your own land and your people, when you see the multitude of the redeemed, the noble army of Martyrs, the Confessors, the Virgins, every righteous soul made perfect in the faith, what will be the joy of all joys? what will be the Vision of all visions? "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD!"

And now, &c.

SERMON VIII.[1]

Low Sunday.

THE BLESSING OF JUDAH.

"And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him: and be Thou an help to him from his enemies."—Deut. xxxiii. 7.

THIS is the blessing of our true Judah: the blessing in which we are now exulting. "Judah," says Jacob, speaking in a higher than the plain literal sense, speaking rather in the person of the FATHER, than in his own, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up." And to the same effect, S. John: "Weep not: the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed;" weep not: the pains and miseries are over, the victory remains; weep not: those very pains and miseries have purchased the seat which is at the Right Hand of the FATHER, and the Name which is above every name; weep

[1] 1860.

not: the cross of suffering has become the banner of salvation.

"Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah." And to which of His many prayers do we choose to refer that saying? Is it to His promise of taking us some day home to Him? "FATHER, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am."

Is it to His pledge that if we follow in His steps, "O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction?" Is it to His intercession for our protection? "Holy FATHER, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me." Is it to His pleading from the Altar of the Cross for our pardon? "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Is it to His oblation of Himself for ourselves? "O My FATHER, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah at the foot of Mount Tabor. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith believing, ye shall receive." Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah by the cave of death. "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah in the chamber of the Paschal Supper. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto

you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah by the Lake of Gennesareth. "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, as He stood for the last time on Mount Olivet. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." But above all things, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, now that, exalted to Thy Right Hand, He pleads the merits of all He has done, and all He has suffered: now that He stretches forth to Thee those Hands once stretched forth on the Cross: now that He presents to Thee the prayers and offerings of the Saints, united to and perfected and completed by His own.

"And bring Him unto His people." For far from His people He was indeed, when He walked in the wilderness of this world: far from those bright courts of heaven: far from the innumerable company, as the prophet speaks, of them that say, Alleluia. But He is again to be brought to His people. Through the grave and gate of death He passed to His joyful Resurrection; by His Resurrection and the great forty days, He passed to His wonderful Ascension. Then truly His people came out to meet Him with joy and everlasting gladness, to hail Him

the victor over the powers that had banded against man's salvation: to acknowledge Him the LORD strong and mighty, even the LORD mighty in battle: to welcome Him, returning alone from the winepress then; but knowing that hereafter they will hail Him as the LORD of armies, when He shall return, with all the hosts of His faithful people, at the latter day.

And is there not another sense too,—so far as our immediate selves are concerned, a nearer and dearer sense,—in which He is to be brought to His people; when He, thus exalted to the throne of GOD, descends no more indeed to suffer, no more to be despised and rejected, but to be the food and sustenance now, as once the purchase and ransom of His faithful servants? Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring Him unto His people: for He said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you;" for He said, "The Bread which I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world;" for He said, "This do in remembrance of Me."

"Let His Hands be sufficient for Him." It is remarkably said; for they were sufficient, but (to say it with all reverence) that was all: He bore to the utmost of His strength as Man: nay, He bore beyond His strength, as when He fell beneath the weight of the Cross. And that

which was given to Him is all that is promised to us. If He had to struggle so in that deadly contest, that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, are we to think it much that we have to strain every nerve, that, to use our dear LORD's own words, we have to *agonise* to enter in at the strait gate? Are you to think it much, dearest Sisters, that what you sometimes are called to do is as much as ever you can do, that you are sometimes pressed out of measure, beyond strength, insomuch that you despair even of life? Sufficiency He promises: "As thy day is, so," it is written in another place, "thy strength shall be:" but more than sufficiency He does not pledge Himself to give. He promises that the road by which you travel home shall be passable. He nowhere binds Himself to make it easy. His hands were sufficient for Him, and that was all. And yours shall be sufficient for you, and that be all too.

But in another sense: us He now uses as His instruments, as His hands, as the soldiers of His war, as the fellow-workers with Him in His purpose. How can we be sufficient in so great a task? How very, very hard it is to make head against His enemies in all our trials; and how have we strength and wisdom enough, to make head against His enemies around us? Yet that also we are pledged to do: and I am sure

we need the prayer for ourselves if any set of persons ever did, that we may be helped in helping Him, that we may be aided in coming to the assistance of the LORD against the mighty. Thou must work in me, O LORD, S. Bernard cries out, or I never can work for Thee. Let His hands be sufficient for Him, He needs them all. Of His mercy it is that He vouchsafes so to employ us: of His mercy it is if He gives us the sufficiency which enables us so to be employed. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of Him:" and be Thou an help to Him from His enemies.

We have been seeing last week how He was surrounded by those enemies: how He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: how all they that went by reviled Him, and how He was made a reproach to His enemies: we saw when, as it seemed, He was not helped from them, when He was given up to the band of men and officers from the chief priests and rulers: when Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required: when the soldiers wrought their own evil will on Him: when it seemed as though His life, and faith, and followers, and teaching, and religion were all ended together. But the help came on the third day. "After two days will He revive us; in the third

day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight."

And how beautifully does all this which is said of the Captain of our Salvation apply also to His soldiers! How well it may be referred to that Judah of us, by whom, according to the literal interpretation of the word, His praise is indeed set forth! Hear, LORD, the prayer of Judah. Of whatever sort—no kind of need, or difficulty, or trouble that He must not be prepared to hear: in whatever place—for "He is the GOD of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea:" in whatever time, "The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble." I well trust that in this last week your Great High Priest has been offering your prayers—your prayers here—to the eternal FATHER, with that addition of His Own: "Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah." He has a right so to plead, when, that He might win to Himself those for whom He pleads, He so became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

"And bring him to his people." As if that was the one end of a Christian life, to be gathered at last to our people. Oh, dear Sisters, what a people that is! what perfection of holiness, what beauty of faith, what snowwhiteness of purity, what intensity of love did they show even while they were here! And how are all

those graces transfigured and beatified where they now are. An own place every one has, (as we were speaking of Judas but on Friday, "that he might go to his own place,") and an own people too. Our own place—if we by the grace of GOD are ever counted worthy of it, we have not seen, and do not know; of our own people we know somewhat, although so dimly and partially.

To this people, then, we ask to be brought. And they themselves, by themselves, were a glorious reward for all the trouble and fatigue of the journey. The Lamb which is in the midst of them, and leads them to living fountains of waters, He, beyond all comparison, He, past the heart of man to conceive, is beyond all. But that great multitude who follow Him, whose delight is daily in His Name and in His righteousness they make their boast—is not that a prospect of joy also, is not that to be prayed for also? For the day when, instead of their having been as we now are, we shall be as they now are; when, having travelled by the King's high road as they did, we shall come to the King's Palace as they have done. "Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people."

"Let his strength be sufficient for him:" the portion of the day in his day, the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil never seeming to promise a

longer supply, and yet never actually failing, the assistance in proportion to the danger, the armour in analogy with the struggle. And then, "Be Thou an help to him from his enemies."

All Eastertide is only as it were a lesson of victory: ushered in by the conquest, ending in the triumph; beginning with the Alleluias of the Resurrection, ending with the Alleluias of the Ascension. A lesson how that Conqueror can help, from whatever pitch of misery or difficulty; a lesson to what He can help, to what a height of happiness and glory.

So we end the services of this Easter Day. So let us try to wait in patience and faith for the other and the better Easter; remembering how the prayers of our Head were heard, and earnestly longing that ours should also in like manner prevail; by remembering how He returned to His people, the company of the angelic host, and longing ourselves to go to *our* people, now in His Presence; remembering how His strength was sufficient for Him, in that He obtained the victory, but not without the struggle, and making up our minds that so and in no other manner it must be with us; remembering how He was fully delivered from all His adversaries, and believing that, in the good time known to Him, He will lift up our head above our enemies round about.

And now, &c.

SERMON IX.[1]

Second Sunday after Easter.

MERCY REJOICING AGAINST JUDGMENT.

"So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet."—2 Sam. ix. 13.

THERE are not many stories in the Old Testament so sad, I think, as that of Mephibosheth. Lamed by his nurse letting him fall in her flight the same day that his father and grandfather fell on Gilboa; then living in fear and obscurity till David, out of his love for Jonathan, took him into his own palace; and then finally disappearing from our sight under circumstances which leave it doubtful whether he really had been guilty of the treacherous ingratitude of aspiring to the kingdom, or was most basely calumniated by his servant Ziba, and so lost half of what the king's kindness had bestowed upon him. Look at it anyhow, it is a miserable story: and it is a

[1] 1863.

sad thought that the family of that Jonathan, whose love was wonderful, passing the love of women, should thus set in thick darkness.

However, sad as it is, let us not, as S. Augustine says, quench the prophecy. A wonderful type he is of every Christian soul. What great battle was that when GOD'S Israel was indeed defeated? when the King of all power, the Will, was mortally wounded, so as thenceforward to have no strength in itself to good? when never before, as never since, did those spiritual Philistines gain so great a victory? When, but in the Garden of Eden, on the Day of the Fall? That was the Gilboa of the human race. Then, indeed, the shield of the mighty *was* vilely cast away—the blessed shield of innocence and sinlessness. Then that was fulfilled which David twice repeats in his lamentation, "The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places." "O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places." That is, Israel, having no cavalry, always fought at disadvantage on plains: the Philistines, being a lowland people, always attacked at disadvantage in the highlands of Palestine: and yet in these very high places it was that the most desperate defeat ever experienced by Israel took place. So of the human race. That was the only one temptation in which Satan ever fought at a disadvantage, with previous innocence

against him, with God's grace to oppose him, with no knowledge of, and experience in man's heart as yet to assist him. The beauty of Israel was slain upon its high places.

And what happened that day to Mephibosheth? As we saw; his nurse, hasting to flee with him, let him fall, and to the end of his life he was lame on both his feet. And we need no one to tell us, my Sisters, how, from that first taint and corruption of our nature, we are utterly powerless to run in the way of God's commandments. Now, nearly the first petition of the Bride in her own dear book is, "Draw me, we will run after thee." Only think for yourselves, my Sisters, how lamely, how half-heartedly, how irregularly every advance of yours is made. Only see what little vexations sometimes keep you back for the time altogether; worries which you know in your own hearts to be miserably mean, and yet which you will not cast away. Some one thing goes wrong, and then you are apt to take no pains that anything should be right. Some one difficulty startles you, and while that is too difficult to be overcome you feel that you cannot press forward at all. Most writers on the subject tell us that the time of all the year when a Religious House drags most heavily is in the fortnight after the immediate Easter holidays are over—when the excitement

of Lent and Easter are gone by; when, as they say, we come down from the more picturesque regions to the flatter plains, albeit a good land and large, a land flowing with milk and honey, still; and when also the advance of Spring is so apt to have a relaxing physical effect. It may be so: and I think it is; but both now, and at all times, we know in our hearts how those who have the highest aims, who have chosen the steepest path, who are travelling the roughest road, most feel the lameness of their nature: can say more than others, from their very hearts that, when they would do good, evil is present with them. And what is to be the remedy? Why, first look at that verse in the Canticles, "Draw me, we will run after Thee." How is the petition answered? It goes on without a break: "The King hath brought me into His chambers." It is marvellous how that One and the selfsame Spirit says one and the selfsame thing in that verse and in our text: "So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet." Lameness in both cases, and yet, in both, eating at the King's table; being brought into His chambers. And yet a difference too. In the Canticles, the Bride asks for a remedy, and the Royal Dwelling is given her: here, the Royal Dwelling has been given, the

Royal Table participated in, and yet the disease remains. Ah, my Sisters! both how true! What that Royal Banquet is, you, more than others, ought to know.

That daily Manna, that glorious Marriage Festival, begun in type on earth, to be ended in antitype in Heaven; how does it answer to the history? It is the remedy—is it not?—so we learn from the Canticles—for the disease. The remedy is taken, and yet the disease remains; so we learn from the text in Samuel. Both, as I said just now, *so* true. I think you know, my Sisters, many of you, how I have always said, Let the weakness, let the fall, let the apparent helplessness be what it may, are you therefore not to receive the LORD's most Blessed Body and Blood? Now hear the words of a Saint—not indeed addressed to Sisters—but to a Religious House. "You are given to this or that sin: you have yielded oftener, you do yield often to this or that temptation; therefore, that most Precious Body and Blood—are they beyond your reach? I say to you what that same LORD said of old time, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!' Do you mean, they are beyond you by way of merit? Most surely; but then, in long past ages, was that glorious gift merited by Augustine or by Hilary, or even by Peter

himself? I trow not. Was it, in our own times, deserved by Bernard," (not yet canonized,) "or by Master Fulbert," (he means S. Fulbert of Chartres,) "or by Alan?" (he means Alan of Lille, surnamed, because of his marvellous learning, the Universal Doctor.) "I trow not indeed. You must then do what they did; you, for the sin, have the remedy; you, for acting as though Joseph were wholly lost, must show your belief that 'Joseph is yet alive, and is Governor over all the land of Egypt.'"

So he.

And now, my Sisters, see what follows in sense, though it precedes the clause in order. "*So* Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem; for he did eat continually at the King's table." And thus for you. Not Jerusalem in the highest sense of all. We cannot thus change the waiting of Sion into the fruition of the Vision of Peace. But what prophecy does this call to mind? Take it in its two clauses, "The people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more."

Yes: of those, dedicated as you are, these predictions ought indeed to be fulfilled.

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SERMON X.[1]

Third Sunday after Easter.

THE TEARS THAT SHALL BE WIPED AWAY.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"—S. John xx. 15.

Is not this, at first sight, your own text, my Sisters? I am sure, in the life you have chosen, you have cause enough for sorrow. No one, like yourselves, can utter David's prayer from the heart, "Put my tears into Thy bottle." No one, but you who have tried it, can tell what is the suffering to be undergone in our dear Lord's service when you are out. The more I see of it, the more I feel that nothing but the immediate help of God could carry you through it. Other work for Christ's sake, however holy, however blessed, so far as the individual suffering is concerned, is child's play compared to this. Therefore it is that the two questions in the text are so ever to be borne in remem-

[1] 1860.

brance together: "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?"

"Why weepest thou?" No great need to ask that, dear Sisters. Why not weep, when everything that makes life dear, that gives this world its brightness, when love, sympathy, help, all the dear communion of friends,—yes, and a hundredfold worse, all actual and immediate services of GOD, are taken away. Every one of you knows what I mean. Some more, some less lately. You all know with how sad hearts you have seen another day of wearing, of unthankful, of unappreciated trouble rise. You know what the actual objects were which met your sight; the poor walls of the cottage; maybe the appliances of illness; maybe the forsaken family; everything wretched, deserted, coarse, beyond what I have power to describe.

Well: and when your hearts sank within you; when you have been tempted to say, How *can* I bear this? How is it possible to drag through another day? How can I face these new difficulties, contend in this new battle-field?—there was, if you could only have seen Him, Another standing by you. S. John Baptist said, "There standeth One among you Whom ye know not." Might not the same have been said to you? Ah! He does not forsake His own in their greatest distress. The more troubles press on them, the

more sorrow shrouds them in, the more He is there, the Man of sorrows. There, my Sisters; but remember, here also, when sorrow has come upon you here. Illness and pain come here; will come; will come, as I said last Sunday, all the more because you are His; but then, He will come too. I speak, therefore, to you that have suffered, or are suffering here, as well as to those that suffer or have suffered abroad.—And what say those lips that spake as never man spake? You know it for yourselves. Those words, first said by the Tomb, are repeated over and over again by the scenes of grief, "Woman, why weepest thou?"

Why? The whole flood of earthly sorrows will pour in on your mind at once. But still, why that? What has rendered you liable to them? Why you, without where to lay your head? Why you, with sickness and pain? And the answer is—what?

Because you resolved to give yourselves to Him in the truest, in the hardest, aye, in the most repulsive to flesh and blood—of all ways that woman can choose. Therefore you weep. Therefore those dear guardian Angels of whom I was speaking to our children this afternoon,[1] rejoice with joy unspeakable.

But see, how He, remembering the command

[1] "Sunday Afternoons at an Orphanage," p. 107.

of His Apostle, "prove your own selves," seeks to prove you. He asks the question again,—"Whom seekest thou?"

You might go through affliction—fatigue—stand face to face with misery—for other causes. It might be the resolution, what others have done, that also to do. It might be, having pledged your word, the determination not to go back from it.

But no, my Sisters. This let me hope: I do hope it with all the force I have; this let me say: I do not doubt it, even when, as so many times, you fall; that He Whom you seek, and for Whom you weep, is JESUS. If that be so; if it really be for Him that you bear what you do bear and have borne,—if it be love without any mixture of earthly feeling, love, without any taint of any inferior passion, that so carries you on: Oh, happy Sisters! Only, let us remember this. It does not follow that every moment you undergo some labour that is sadly against flesh and blood, you volunteer some fatigue, you accept some pain,—you should be conscious to yourself, should say so in so many words, that it is for the love of JESUS. Hear what S. Bernard says.

"You cannot keep your love on Him as you should? Your thoughts wander to this or that earthly matter? You are not conscious that He

is the gem which every faculty of your souls enshrines? One or two of you, my brethren, have served the king of the land," (he was preaching to Cistercian Brethren,) "before you gave your names to the King of kings. You have fought for him,—aye, and bled for him. Well; in the midst of the battle, when you were riding down against this or that enemy,—when you were heading your troops against this or that fortress, was your king always in your mind? In the midst of your career, did you say, over and over again, in the very depth of your heart, 'This I do for my king—for my beloved king—for my king who well merits all the labours of his servants? Oh how I desire that he was here! Oh how I wish to exert my utmost of power for him!' I trow not. Yet for him you fought; and for him you conquered. And so now. Blessed and happy are they who can keep the name Jesus always sensibly before them: taste that honey: see that sapphire: hear that music: scent that incense. But this is rather the reward than the duty; rather the privilege than the task. It can only be complete in the next world, though it may be begun indeed in this. Yet you *know* that He is there—love Him, and you shrink from nothing; leave Him, and your courage droops. He is ever yours; you ever His."

Those words, my Sisters, are marvellously wise. Take them to yourselves. You had not our LORD actually in your thoughts in this or that moment of sorrow. Granted. Well: but were you the less seeking Him?

Take it this way. Suppose, dearest Sisters, I come in suddenly on any one of you while nursing in a cottage. Suppose I were able to question you then, as I might and do in that tribunal where all hearts are open. Suppose I were to ask the immediate subject of your thoughts. Should I be discouraged if you said, Oh, it is only, How I am longing to be at home? or, if you were simply concentrating your powers on what the business of the hour demanded? Not one whit. But, my Sisters, I think I do not know you if it be not so, that, if I were to ask, When do you remember last to have had our dear LORD in your thoughts? I think I do not know you unless you could say, Oh, then, —or then,—or then,—but within the last hour. Now, judge yourselves. I say plainly, that, if I could ask any one of you, here or elsewhere, in joy or in sorrow, When were you last consciously thinking of our LORD, and the time were more than an hour off, I should be sadly, sadly disappointed.

"Do you think," our dear Sister whom we have sent as an offering to Paradise once said to

me, merely in the course of some conversation, "do you think I could live here for ten minutes without thinking of Him?" Dear child,—and now, as we may piously believe, she is satisfied with that thought, replenished with that fulness.

"Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" And notice that the answer she gives does not formally answer the question. But yet it shows where her heart is. Compare the two sentences of two who loved dearly. How does the Song of Songs begin? "Let *Him* kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; for Thy love is better than wine." Who is that *He?* Love can tell: not reason. How does S. Mary Magdalene speak? "Sir, if thou have borne *Him* hence, tell me where thou hast laid *Him*, and I will take *Him* away." Truly each shows where her heart was: the spotless bride and the glorious penitent.

And the question must be so true all through this world. "Whom seekest thou?" It is a world of seeking; you know where is the world of finding—

> "To them that seek Thee, O how kind!
> But what art Thou to them that find!"

Yes: it is a world of seeking indeed—will be—ought to be. See now, how each of you longs to have your dear LORD more plainly shown

to you than ever yet. How you desire to know more of Him: to feel that in all ways He is more with you: that in all your sufferings He suffers with you: in all your joys He rejoices with you.

"Woman, whom seekest thou?" Would you not say—or shall I say it for you? "O LORD JESUS, it is Thou Whom they seek, and Thee alone. They might have sought for Thee in the ordinary road of Thy servants; perhaps they might have found Thee there. But no: they have desired to leave the beaten highway, and to seek Thee, with Mary Magdalene at the Sepulchre: the sepulchre of all earthly desires, hopes, wishes, buried with Thee, buried for Thee. And as Thou didst manifest Thyself earliest to her, so, while yet Thou appearest not to the world, let them feel Thee near, let them know Thee present, let them turn to Thee with that dear and happy 'Rabboni!'"

These are your thoughts put into words,—are they not, dear Sisters? They are the only thoughts which can support you, in those frightful times, when you may say most truly, most earnestly, "I should utterly have fainted, but that I believed verily to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." As each one of you returns from such a trial, I cannot tell how I rejoice over that one, with what joy, yet with what trembling. With what joy: "Blessed be the

LORD my GOD, Who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." With what trembling; for, whatever is done, whatever has been passed, who may not finally fall if they relax their care? If there be one shout of exultation louder than another in the dwelling of those lost spirits, must it not be for that miserable Sister, who has done so much, endured so much,—and all in vain? I think I have told you of that Carthusian convent where the strictest rules of the Order were kept up,—where the silence, the solitude, the fasting, seemed almost too much for human nature: and which, being broken open in the French Revolution, disclosed cells, with the most holy and ascetic texts, as the custom is, inscribed over each door,—which were full of the works, not only of Voltaire and Rousseau, but with impure and filthy books and pictures, the very delight of hell. I shall never forget how, in the cloister of that wonderful monastery, the Sub-Prior told me the tale: how his voice trembled as he said, "No religious Order can assure salvation."

And for you,—may not unsubdued tempers, allowed discontent, unchecked words, an unbridled tongue,—at least, is it not possible that after all, they may shut you out from the Heavenly Garden of Eden? Possible we know it to be—and the very idea of possibility is too sad.

But now: "Woman, whom seekest thou?" You seek JESUS of Nazareth, and He is with you: He dwells with you: He is about to give you His Benediction. Oh that He, Who thus tarries with you all the days of your life, under the poor form of Bread and Wine, may cause you to dwell with Him all the days of His everlasting life in the fulness of His Glory, in the entireness of His Love, in the effluence of the Beatific Vision!

And now, &c.

SERMON XI.[1]

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

THE TAUNTS OF THE ENEMY.

"And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?"—Nehemiah iv. 2.

And can we not almost hear the spiritual Sanballat asking the same question, offering the same taunts, concerning those who are resisting his power, resolved not to bear his yoke, fortifying themselves against his strongest assaults? "What do these feeble Jews?" Feeble indeed. One who reckons amongst the mightiest of Christ's warriors has left on record how "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would;" how the good that he would, he

[1] 1864.

did not, but the evil that he would not that he did.

Feeble indeed! But then we know Whose strength is made perfect in weakness; we know how true that is, "When I am weak then am I strong." Feeble indeed! But then the LORD Whom we serve was feeble also; not, of a truth, in temptations, but in the sinless infirmities of human nature.

"What do these feeble Jews?" This is what they do. Set apart for His service for ever, bound to Him, or hoping to be bound to Him, by vows which cannot be relaxed, this one thing they do, or at least are endeavouring to do it: forgetting the things that are behind, they press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. This they do: many a temptation they have had and will have; many a fall they have had, and many more probably they will have. But spite of temptations and falls, still they persevere; and GOD give them grace to persevere to the end. Feeble, but according to that teaching of S. Paul's, Jews also: "he is a Jew which is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of GOD;" for Judah by interpretation is praise.

"Will they fortify themselves?" Yes, that they will also do. Externally by the cross, the veil, the ring; internally by the Source of all strength, the Bread of the Mighty, and the Wine

that blossometh into Virgins; by their prayers at their desks, by their visits to the Blessed Sacrament, by their Confessions, yes, and by their work. And those fortifications, GOD being their hope and strength, shall, though frequently threatened—though some of them may sometimes be, for a while, carried by assault—yet finally be made the means of their being received into that city, of which, in its utter impossibility of knowing an enemy, in its blessed necessity of sinlessness, it is written that "the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there."

"Will they sacrifice?" Assuredly. Day by day they will sacrifice.

"Will they make an end in a day?" Most surely not; nor in a year, nor in any fixed number of years. Then only will they make an end when the worn-out tabernacle of the triumphant warrior is laid aside for a season. Then only will they make an end, when the Cross, so long their pole-star and their defence, rests motionless on a heart that has ceased to beat. Then only will they make an end when, arrayed in their last bridal dress, they await the return of the Bridegroom from the marriage. And then, GOD helping them, shall be the end—the happy end of a most blessed toil, the victorious conclusion of a hard won fight.

The prize, the prize secure!
The athlete nearly fell,
Bare all he *could* endure,
And bare not always well.
But he may smile at dangers gone
Who puts the victor's garland on!

"Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" Yes, and that too. For each of these souls is, in the LORD's good time, to be built up into a temple perfectly dedicated to Himself. All the ruins are to be repaired, all the rubbish to be removed, and then will come those joyful words, "It is the Voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled," and He thus entering in, will be its most blessed Guest for ever.

So it is, my Sisters, that you see in these insults of Sanballat the likeness of those assaults and taunts and violences directed against that which ought to be the little Jerusalem of your own hearts. And to whom did Sanballat speak? He spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria. And you, too, know well, that it is no single enemy that you have to cope with—no single set of enemies—but that singular and hellish caricature of the highest and most glorious doctrine of the Catholic Faith, the threefold enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil: the threefold domestic traitors, the lust of the flesh,

the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. To these it is that the Prince of the power of the air speaks. They it is who will assist, applaud, further his counsels.

But that is not the only sense in which we may take the text, and not the sense which made me choose it now. You all know the work which, with GOD's help, we wish to take in hand.[1] The very question put to one of us by one who dearly wished well to us, brought this text to my mind. "Such a work? and such means?" Now show them, my Sisters, that it is still the same GOD Who will use the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, the things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are. Over and over again I have spoken to you of the infinite power of prayer. Prayer first: but remember also that saying of our dear LORD, "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." So you will each of you do what you can for our work on Tuesday, and our Sisters, who have the same task, only at a distance, will offer their troubles, weariness, pains, on that day, for us.

The more that, to the eye of the world, our hope would only be folly, the more it is your part and duty to show how true and real it is. Let us all try on that Tuesday how earnestly we

[1] The building of a new house for the Sisterhood.

can ask, how in every possible way we can strive, so that only we may conquer. If ever there was an occasion to which that verse applied, "Except the LORD build the house, their labour is but lost that build it," surely it is this.

Sanballat and Tobiah could not even have said of us so much as that taunt of theirs: "Behold that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." I was going to have said, that I wished more of us could have been here to pray about this especial matter, on that especial day. But I do not. There never was a truer motto than that, "He that works well prays well." And those away from us—wonderfully many for our numbers they are—all know that they must join their prayers to ours, and will also, I hope, offer with this intention, whatever of difficulty or trial or pain they may especially suffer that day.

It does seem to me so wonderful that we read those promises of our dear LORD, and more especially those which, so to speak, He more dearly heaped on His Church, in the same night in which He was betrayed: such as, "If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it," and then go away and talk among ourselves about, "If we shall be able to do this or that." The more shame to us; because those who have not belonged to the one true fold, nevertheless have

had the faith as a grain of mustard seed, which worked far greater wonders for them than this which we now ask would be for us. And to us, in this especial way of supporting us, God's mercy has been so especially manifest, that that text, "Because Thou *hast* been my Helper, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings *will* I rejoice," ought to be our motto, if it ever was any one's.

But, to return for one moment to the higher sense. God grant, my Sisters, that of all of you some day that may be true, which notwithstanding the taunts and jeers of Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, and the army of Samaria, was wrought by the prayers and the faith of Nehemiah the Jew; "The wall was finished:" the wall, that wall which shall shut in to you all good, which shall shut out from you all evil; that wall, great and high with its twelve gates, and at the gates twelve Angels where the street of the City is pure gold, as it were transparent glass; "the City which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the [illegible] the light thereof."

And now, &c.

SERMON XII.[1]

Rogation Sunday.

THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY.

"These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the FATHER."—S. John xvi. 25.

"I HAVE spoken unto you in proverbs." So our dear LORD might say of all His dealings with us, whether as He is GOD of nature or GOD of grace. This it is that invests every change of season, every variation of climate, every bursting forth of the fresh young bud, or fall of the poor decayed leaf, with so much sanctity. There they are—the shell of the nut, the husk of the grain, the shrine of the diamond. But their true meaning not here. That lies far away in the New ens and the New Earth, not to be fully revealed till the day when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality. I have spoken

[1] 1861.

to you before now of the way in which God has impressed the likeness of Himself, not only on man, with his threefold division into body, soul, and spirit, but on inanimate nature. Well says the Wise Man, that the sun is a marvellous instrument of the Most High, representing Him as it does by so remarkable a parable. It is one, as we know; and yet it is made up of three essences, light, heat, and electricity: and these three are one. Not only so: but each is a glorious type of one Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is the heat that is the agent in bringing out vegetation—in causing, as God says to Job, the bud of the tender herb to spring forth. And there we have the Father, principally representing Himself to us as the Maker of all things, visible and invisible. Then we know where and of Whom it is written, "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And the third essential quality of the sun, electricity, acting so invisibly, but yet so mightily, influencing all motion, shaping all form, how marvellously does it set forth that Holy Ghost, Who works so invisibly also, but yet so powerfully—Who forms and controls, and leads and guides, we know not when nor how. Again: "God is Light:" and each ray of light is made up of three, red, yellow, and blue; and though this is not the time for it, I might go into

that subject and show you how, the deeper we pursue it, the truer symbol it affords.

Again: there are, and can only be, in music, three primitive notes—and in the whole mystery of an octave what depth of parable! As man was formed in the image and likeness of GOD, so is the eighth in the image and likeness of the first. Then the third, as any theoretical musician will tell you, has some remarkable peculiarities of an actual Trinity. But can we go from the third to the eighth at once, overleaping the gap, and yet making a full and perfect chord? Not so: we want a mediator, and that mediator is the fifth. Is there no parable here? Trace out that octave in Holy Scripture. Light, made on the first day: the true Light rising from the tomb on the eighth, which is also the first. Paradise, the first age of the world: the eighth will be the glorious octave of eternal blessedness. Take the LORD'S Prayer: the first petition, "Thy kingdom come:" run through each varying prayer in this dear rainbow of peace, and the eighth colour shall be the same as the first: only what was there future is here present—"Thy Kingdom come," the first; "For Thine *is* the Kingdom," the octave. Take the Beatitudes: the first, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven"—the eighth merely the octave of the first, only intensified

and glorified: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy." When our dear LORD was about to show what will be the resurrection bodies of His people in the octave of glory, by His own Transfiguration, when did He ascend Mount Tabor? "About an *eight days* after these sayings." When this harp had given out, by means of the tension and racking of all its chords, its seven sweetest of notes on the Cross, where was the octave of the first? Surely in that first word to His assembled Apostles, "Peace be unto you." The first, the prayer, "FATHER, forgive them!" the eighth, the accomplishment, "Peace be unto you."

Yes, my Sisters: it is well that we should accustom ourselves to remember that everything we see, or hear, or feel, is but part of one great parable—never to be explained till the consummation of all things. And it has pleased GOD not only Himself so to instruct us, but to lay a kind of necessity on the works of men to carry the same teaching. It does not surprise me to see the Blessed Trinity impressed on the sun and the light; but it does surprise me when I notice—as any of you may at this time of the year—that a hop will not grow unless it has three poles round which to twine. It does not surprise me when I see that the Cross, impressed

on plants, keeps all evil qualities from them, so that the fruit of cruciferous plants may always be eaten with safety; but it does surprise me when I find the mill, by which comes our earthly food, setting up the sign of the Cross: when I see the barn, wherein earthly grain is stored, built in the form of the Cross: when I see the railway guarded and directed by the signal-post that stretches out its arms, and by the sign of the Cross shelters the passed train. And ought it to be quite without a lesson to you, my Sisters, that the grey dress you wear can only be made by the intermixture of seven colours?

"These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs." And remember, but an hour before He had spoken to them in the most glorious and august of parables that ever, even by Him, could be spoken. In the Old Testament it was, "There shall no man see Me and live." But in a parable, as the Apostles had seen Him, so do we, this very moment. True, He is concealed from us under the appearance of another substance: true, He That is glorious beyond all glory in Heaven, now manifests Himself to us under the humility of a little bread: true, He that hears the songs of the Angels vouchsafes, rather than not give us this parable, to expose Himself to the insults of ignorant and wicked men. And then comes the question: there is the parable—

of what things does He speak to you by it? A question, my Sisters, on which your inward, hidden life turns. It must be of holiness, if you hear Him rightly; it must be of purity, if ever you would see Him more clearly ("Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD"); it must be of gentleness and lovingness, for the yoke's sake you have taken upon you; it must be of straining every nerve in whatever work you have in hand; for He said of old, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" But He goes on to something yet more glorious. "The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the FATHER."

Our Elijah is now still going on and talking with us—is still saying, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I be taken away from you." But long since He has passed the Jordan, and now we are expecting the chariot of fire, and the horses of fire, that are to take Him back into Heaven. Yes: but not even so to us will this His promise be fulfilled. He will still continue to speak to us as before, while we remain in the flesh; it is that which hinders our nearer and clearer vision, till it shall have been purified by that which Saints have not feared to call the great Sacrament of death.

"O happy and blessed day," (cries a holy Bishop,) "well called *the* day—the day that cometh, GOD knoweth when, and GOD knoweth how: when, instead of the faint impression of the end of the staves of the Ark being seen in the veil of the Temple, the veil itself shall be rent, and the Ark itself shall be made manifest, and the Shechinah of glory shall at last reveal itself! O day, longed for by such a multitude of Saints, seen afar off and desired in the long-sufferings of Confessors, lying hid as a secret strength in the breast of the Martyrs, clasped nearly and dearly to the heart of the Virgins! O day, of which the prophet speaks, day, known to the LORD, not day nor night, whereof it is written that at eventime it shall be light! What but the remembrance of thee could enable us to pass along the thorny paths of this evil generation, when it seems as if faith were at an end, love extinct, hope perished from the face of the earth! What will it be to behold the King in His beauty, Whom here we have so loved, when He had neither form nor comeliness? what to see the wisdom of our true Solomon, and the House that He hath built—yea, but not for Himself more than for us; and the meat of His Table, and the sitting of His Servants—how they sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and the attendance of His ministers in

their ninefold hierarchy, and their apparel—the white linen, and the crowns and the harps; and His cupbearers, the Martyrs who will present to this Royal Pharaoh on His Birthday, (of a truth the third day,) that wine which He shall drink new in His FATHER's Kingdom; and His Ascent by which He went up to the House of the LORD, by the depth of humility to the height of glory, from the extreme of anguish to the supremity of gladness, from the most abject weakness to the most superabundant power! Is this what Thou dost mean, O LORD JESUS, when Thou tellest us that Thou wilt no more speak in parables? Then, if the twilight of Thy former teaching was so glorious, what will be the full blaze when Thou declarest, 'I will tell you plainly!'" He might well say so, my Sisters, and he knows now, oh, how much more clearly, though not as yet seeing face to face!

"The time cometh." What would one not bear, if one could only be assured of that! if one could only, by the infallible assurance of a "Verily, verily, I say unto you," know of a certainty that some day we shall be with Him in Paradise! Whereas, now you must always, always remember that the greater grace any of you have received now, you *may*—but GOD of all His mercy forbid! be the deeper plunged into condemnation then! I do not know that

any more solemn warning was ever written than that of S. Anselm to a Sister.

"And you say, 'This is but a little thing. Truly, I do not spend the same time in prayer that I once did—is it in my rule? I do not throw the same energy into prayer that I once did—is that in my power?' As if we could measure by line and plummet the love owed to GOD! 'Thou shalt love,' saith He, 'the LORD thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.' Temptations! every Sisterhood will abound with them. But what then?—Trials? they are a Sister's passports in the way wherein she should go.—Pain? *that* a complaint, from one who is bone of bone and flesh of flesh with Him Who suffered Calvary!"

So he says,—and he says one thing more. "For you that persevere: for you, who, remembering what the LORD, according to His Human Nature, hath done, are resolved to go and do likewise: for you, Who have but one fear, lest you should *not* suffer with Him, but one hope, to ascend with Him: His Blessing be upon you, His Hope be amongst you, His Love be your bond to Him (and to each other,)—His affliction here lead you to the fruition of His Glory hereafter!" So he prayed for his Sisters: so I pray for mine.

And now, &c.

SERMON XIII.

Ascension-tide.

IT IS EXPEDIENT FOR YOU.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away."—S. John xvi. 7.

When the God of Truth, the God Who is Truth, begins with such an affirmation,—an affirmation which He never elsewhere was pleased to use, we must be sure that something in itself very hard to believe is coming. That saying of His, which caused so many of His disciples to depart from Him then, that saying which so many of His disciples will not really believe now, "Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you:" even that was not prefaced so. Indeed, were we not so used to the words,—did we not so well, from childhood, know their context, I am sure that we should be startled by them; we should wonder what they were going to preface. The Eternal God speaking to poor weak man,

and beginning the sentence with, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth." I tell you the Truth! How could He do otherwise? How could we ever think He *could* do otherwise? Even Balaam knew better. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

Well; and it was going to be the saying which, of all those which those Blessed Lips ever spake, must have required most faith in His Apostles. As I said a moment ago, we are so used to the words that we lose the sense of their marvellousness. "It is expedient for you that I go away." Expedient for *you*. Had He said, "for *Me*," no need to have commenced them with such a declaration. But, "expedient for *you*," must have seemed the hardest of all possible things to believe. And He, knowing this, vouchsafes in His great love, not only so to certify them that He means what He says,—but, having said it, to assign a reason for it. "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you."

Now, my Sisters, when I reminded you just now of those disciples, who left our Lord because of His teaching about His own Body and Blood, I know you felt how blessed are our eyes,

for they see, and our ears, for they hear, what He gave us, and what He taught us of, in that great Sacrament. With all the strength of our hearts and souls we believe in that saying. But this other saying,—the one that seemed to Him to require, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth:" are you quite so sure that you do believe it really? You are different from most of His servants, you are infinitely different from most women, if you do; at least if you do, without a great effort.

No priest but knows this: that the most constant thing he has to hear about in that place where all hearts are open, and no secrets hid, is that feeling of utter coldness and deadness and apathy; of not being able to do more than say the formal words of prayer; not able to realise any blessedness in the most Blessed Sacrament: which the French theologians technically call *desolation*, and the English, being 'by themselves.' All are more or less subject to this: but women far more than men. Why that is so, presently. But we may see in the writings of the Saints, and of those that have come very near being Saints, this feeling expressed over and over again. You may read letter after letter of S. Theresa, or S. Jane Frances de Chantal, or Agnes Arnauld, and find nothing else but complaints about this. You see, when they wrote, the days of their

purification were not yet accomplished, and so they needed that trial. *And they had it.*

"Oh, yes! I say my prayers, if you call that saying them. Oh, yes! I come to the Blessed Sacrament, if you call that coming. But all the time, for any love I have,—sometimes, it almost seems, for any belief I have,—I might as well not come at all. Sometimes I begin to think" (of a truth, my Sisters, that old serpent *is* more subtil than any beast of the field) "I had better stay away."

And, if you are told that all this is to be expected; that this, call it suffering or temptation, proves not a whit that you are not GOD's true and dear child, you ask, and reasonably too, Rebekah's question, "If it be so, why am I thus?"

Well; we will try to find out. But there are two questions mixed up together here, which, however, we will take separately. Why it is likely it should so be; and why it is expedient that it should so be.

Why it is likely: and I mean now, why it is especially likely that women should be troubled in this way. And, to begin from the beginning; while we all know the tremendous power that the devil has of tempting, we hardly think enough of the immense delight he takes in *teazing*. You know that those who are loving and serving GOD with their whole souls will sometimes

be worried with the most horribly blasphemous thoughts, almost whispered into their ears; and those who are the purest of heart in like manner will be tormented with thoughts of impurity. If God, in His wisdom and love, does not see fit to hinder our being tempted, there is certainly no reason why He should shield us from being teazed. But then,—have never any of you, when you have seen some child teazing another far weaker than himself, stopped the one, indeed, but said to the other also, "Don't you know, now, that if you did not fret yourself about it so much, he would not go on as he does?" And is not that the exact advice that S. Francis de Sales gives, in his homely graphic way to S. Jane Frances de Chantal? "My child, I wish your skin were a little thicker, and then you would not cry out so about these flea-bites."

That being so, then, and the devil knowing us all so infinitely well—as in temptations he attacks the weakest places, so, in these teazings he naturally attacks the tenderest. He knows very well how, as regards earthly affection, woman expects and gives, and cannot be happy without more external signs and assurances of it than man. He knows that the way in which two men,—friends who would bear anything for each other, perhaps die for each other,—meet after a long absence, would be iciness between

women. Then apply that to higher things. He knows that woman suffers most from the loss of sensible comfort in His Presence Whom she loves best; that she feels that cold more; that she minds that darkness more; and therefore, coward as he is, he attacks her there. He knows that she has not the power that man has of falling back on a previous certainty: "However I may feel now, I know it is not really so, and I shall not worry myself;" the power which made the astronomer Galileo say those sublime words, when forced to set his hand to the retractation of his then new teaching, that the earth moves and the sun stands still: "It does move, though."

Now, my Sisters, whatever else I may not understand, this feeling I know I do understand, and I think that many among you must feel that I do. The fact, then, of this feeling being so common, is certain: I think I have given you the true reason why it should be a woman's trial; but now we come to the harder question, why it should be expedient—and expedient for *you*.

But how do we know that it is expedient? Well, we might be certain of it from all we get out of those trials of Saints, who, clearly as we (bystanders, you know, see most of the game) can discern, notwithstanding, (it may be,

because of,) those feelings, were so earnestly fighting the good fight, running the true race. But I will not now appeal to those blessed Saints, but to the Source of all their sanctity, the Holy Ghost Himself.

And what do we read about this matter in the Song of Songs? "By night upon my bed I sought Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not." Of course that text may have (I should rather say, may be patient of,) a far lower meaning, if you choose, as I might say, to degrade it so. There are those who can only see in it this meaning: that the really faithful soul who seeks her Lord idly will not find Him. "On my bed I sought Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, and found Him not." But no great need, one should think, that the dearest chapter of the dearest book (of course excepting the Psalms) in the Old Testament, should have been written to tell us *that*. The far higher, the far deeper, the far sweeter meaning comes out in such lovely concord with our Lord's words in our text. Hear them first together. "By night on my bed I sought Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not." "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away."

Yes: it is the world shut out; the calm,

quiet, holy night; the Bride and Bridegroom alone; she, knowing herself His, His entirely, His unreservedly; and yet "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Because "it is expedient for you that I go away."

However, there remains that question: Why is it expedient, to those that are really and truly serving their LORD, that He should go away? Of course all our natural feelings would follow the example of the Saint of whom we were talking lately, who, however, was not a Saint in this matter, (only that, as on another occasion, so on this, for the more confirmation of our faith he was permitted to doubt; and I shall not less have his love and help because I thus speak of him,) we should follow his example with a flat contradiction,—"It is highly expedient *not* to go away."

But first: see what that "going away" means. The same GOD of Truth Who said that, said also, "Lo, I am with you alway." In one kind of presence He went away; in the other, never. And so, my Sisters, He is only in one sense away from you, when you have those feelings. They are hard to bear. Certainly. Though perhaps the hardness of them proves this, among other things, that you do love that same dear LORD. We do not mind—do we?—the absence of any one for whom we do not care?

We all know, we may be thankful for it. And mind this. It is very easy, any one of you may say, to tell you all this. Of course it is. But I only say what I try hard to do; and that in a way in which you cannot know it. Did you ever think how hard it must be to a Priest to see any dear child of his, whom he yet knows to be a true servant of our LORD, not only fancying herself forsaken by Him, but really and truly to all appearance going backward? committing a sin five or six times which when she last saw him, she had committed only twice or thrice? One would not dare to say, even taking the widest and broadest view, that it was expedient that our LORD should *so* go away. S. Augustine might say most nobly, "O sin of Adam, certainly necessary, which merited such and so great a Redeemer," but few besides, even of the Saints, would have dared the words. But another saying of our LORD's we may take hold of. For do you not believe, my Sisters, that Priests care in that way quite as much for you as you do for yourselves—often, a great deal more? If you do not, you must have a very low idea of them. But if one has no right in such a case to hear the words we are speaking of—"It is expedient for you that I go away," certainly one has a right to hear those other—"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

In this present matter, we may not, and most

likely do not, know all the reasons why our dear LORD permits this isolation. But some we certainly do know.

It tries our faith. And we know that, in our LORD's dear love, His servants' faith is never tried beyond its strength.

Compare the Syrophœnician woman's faith, the persevering reiteration of her often denied request, with the faint, half belief of the father who came to entreat our LORD concerning his son, with, "*If* Thou canst do anything." And see how in each case, the trial was proportioned to the strength that had to bear it.

And then, (which is not the same thing in different words,) it tends to strengthen that most glorious power of trust. I suppose that perfect trust between any two human beings is the noblest thing in the world. There can be nothing higher than to be able to say of any absent friend, when from force of circumstances and distance you must, you are perfectly aware, seem unkind—"We can trust each other."

And then, lastly, remember, "*This* is not your rest." How much is left for a future world! "Touch Me not," here, "*for* I am not yet ascended to My FATHER." Broken and imperfect our communion with Him must be here: but what will be the full perfect eternal oneness with Him there?

And now, &c.

SERMON XIV.[1]

Sunday after Ascension Day.

FAITH AND WEAKNESS.

"A certain woman which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of JESUS, came in the press behind, and touched His garment."—S. Mark v. 25, 27.

IF I have not hitherto spoken to you about this miracle, it is partly because of the difficulty the subject has in itself, partly because there is more to be grasped in it than one sermon can, however passingly, take hold of. However, with GOD's help, let us try.

And first: herein it stands alone among miracles; that it is a wonder within a wonder, a wheel within a wheel. And here I think we are too apt to pass unnoticed the wonderful patience of Jairus. Clearly he had faith to believe that our dear LORD could raise up his daughter from everything but death itself: but

[1] 1864.

there, if his faith did not altogether end, it terribly shook. And if, as some think, (and there is no reason in the Evangelical narrative why it should not have been so,) the miracle of the widow of Nain's son was worked after this, small blame to him who had to look back to the day when the dead man, cast hastily into the grave of Elisha, revived and stood up on his feet. So think, my Sisters, when, in that poor father's eyes, every moment was infinitely precious: he had left his daughter at the point of death; one or two minutes might be all in all in that hand to hand struggle between life and death,—think what it must have been to have had the stoppage, the hindrance, the questioning by our LORD; the denial at first by all, and then the time consumed by the woman's full confession. And yet S. Mark, who describes (to speak with all reverence of that which is written by the HOLY GHOST) with such a graphic reality, all the little circumstances of both miracles, never gives a hint that Jairus, in his own misery, was impatient with this poor suppliant.

Now, my Sisters, notice the next point all the more, because you may—every priest may—have to deal with it. Many a time, in the history of our LORD's miracles, we find faith mixed with unbelief: this is the only time, as the Fathers are almost unanimous in pointing out, that,

mingled to a certain extent with unbelief, it also was mixed with superstition. She believed in the virtue that went out from that Most Precious Body: she rightly believed. But she looked on the touching the hem of that garment as a kind of charm which might bring to pass the cure she longed for, while it left the Author of that cure ignorant that it had been wrought. And yet that dear LORD forgave both the unbelief and the superstition, for the sake of the faith. Now, my Sisters, here is the lesson for you among the poor. Never think that those who, believing, for example, that they are doing a good work by sitting down and reading a chapter of the Bible (of which, very likely, they understand not one sentence) on a Sunday afternoon, get no gain thereby.

Among many dear sayings of S. Francis de Sales, I know not of one dearer than that when a poor old ignorant woman pressed forward to obtain a place within hearing of the pulpit, when the Saint was about to preach a Latin sermon. "But she cannot understand a word," said the official, who pointed out to the Bishop her place. "Then, perhaps," replied S. Francis, "while I am preaching to the rest of the congregation, the HOLY GHOST Himself, for her faith's sake, may be teaching her."

And so, although undoubtedly I would if I

could, in the place of any one of you, change such a prayer as "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John," &c., into something better; yet believe me, that the being taught that such a prayer was altogether absurd, and the having teaching of the like kind pressed upon them, has often, before now, given such a shock to the pure simple faith of the very ignorant, as no amount of better theological teaching could make up to them.

Remember what one, himself no obscure type of the Good Shepherd, said: "If men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die."

But now, the next thing is:—what was it that made this miracle different from all, or almost all, worked by Him, the LORD of all wonders? Why did she come to Him in a crowd? and what did she expect and hope to gain from Him there?

Why did she come to Him in a crowd? Ah my Sisters! and what a marvellous lesson that is to us, and how then were the difficulties of those that were in earnest exactly the same as they are now! She did not dare to ask openly for healing. For two reasons. The first: you must remember that she stood in the same position to the rest of the multitude as a leper. Therefore she perhaps feared that He, had she told Him what her case was, might have shrunk from making Himself legally unclean by touching her. Ah!

little she knew the glorious love of those Hands that touched so many a leper, even in the days while that same LORD tabernacled among men, saying, "I *will*, be thou clean:" those Hands so glorious, (and the more, because they now are printed with the marks of the nails, and will be so to all eternity,) that have power to cast out all manner of sicknesses and all infirmities of sin, those Hands are not to be defiled by any earthly contact. They touched the bier of the widow's son; they took the maid by the hand, and she arose. And, "the hem of His garment," very likely, because, as we know, according to the notions of the Pharisees, there was a particular holiness that resided in the hem or the phylactery, where indeed certain texts from the Pentateuch were wont to be inscribed.

But the other—and perhaps the only real reason—goes much deeper,—teaches us of far higher lessons. No doubt it was the shame of speaking of her disease that made her unwilling to cry to our dear LORD for mercy. And see how, while she obtained that mercy, this very attempt of hers turned out exactly the opposite way. She could not make up her mind to tell her sorrows to our LORD even in the midst of His Apostles; nay, as she might doubtless have found Him, to our LORD by Himself. Therefore she shall do so in the midst of the vast crowd,

and it shall be recorded to the end of time. My Sisters, can you have a better allegory when you attempt to bring any one to Confession? That, bitter a thing as it is, there, even in the silence of a quiet room, there, in the ear of one Priest, perhaps the greater sinner of the two, how infinitely more dreadful,—how infinitely worse for flesh and blood, before men and angels? even if it be followed by the "Come, ye blessed?"

But there is a deeper likeness yet. This poor woman had suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. The words mean more than at first sight they might be taken to signify. The remedies which the ancient physicians prescribed for this poor sufferer's disease are so more than painful—so horrible—that it is only wonderful that even death should not have seemed preferable. And so, what are the remedies that other physicians, such as the world, or our own evil nature, or Satan, propose against a sense of sin? Plunging deeper into it; shutting one's eyes wilfully and hoping the best; or, which is perhaps really more dangerous, that teaching concerning our dear LORD's imputed righteousness which has so often whispered to a sinner's heart, Peace, peace, when there was no peace.

This too you may lay up in your memory,—it may be a help and a comfort to some poor patient

hereafter. This afflicted woman had faith—not of the strongest, but still real—and yet, by her false modesty, she almost lost her bodily cure: would altogether have lost it, had the LORD been only that Great Prophet whom she imagined Him to be, and not the all-wise GOD.

"Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me." Ah, my Sisters! how wonderfully, wonderfully true in all ages since then!

How many a Priest in giving the LORD's Body and Blood to a congregation that is strange to him, must have felt: "Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee: they touch with their hands that Body which was nailed for them to the Cross: they touch with their lips the Blood, which, as a stream of Life, welled out on Calvary. They all throng, they all press Thee: but perhaps of only one or two wouldst Thou say that they so touched Thee, as that virtue is gone out of Thee." Yes: it may be so indeed. They come pressing around (and it is more than that in the Greek: it is, so to press as to be troublesome) and then S. Augustine takes occasion to show that a Sacrament ill received caused, in His foreknowledge of it, another sorrow to the Man of Sorrows. They come in crowds; and the healing virtue goes out to how few!

My Sisters, even this morning, when I was

giving each of you in her turn the Bread of Life, was it not natural that the same question came into my mind: who, at that time, in that particular Sacrament, who touched, really touched, the Source of all healing—whether there were any (but I earnestly hope not)—that only pressed upon Him? Ah! how I hope—ah, how I fain would believe, that to every one of you, without any single exception, that Virtue did go forth; that the strength, health, life, hope, love, which He *is*, were by and in Him communicated to you!

And then, at last, comes the perfect cure. At last. For notice that, at first, *all* denied,—all, the woman herself included. But when that loving perseverance of His still insisted, "Somebody *hath* touched Me," then she came trembling, and falling down before Him she declared unto Him for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately.

"Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Faith, such as hers was, could not cast out shame: Hope, strong though in her it must have been, could not: Love *shall*. If she had after all hung back, can we believe that the glorious effect would have remained? As it is, she shall receive a fuller blessing than she had asked. "Thy faith hath saved thee:" saved thee, we may not doubt, not only from her disease, but

from her sins: not only set her free from her present sickness, but opened her a door into that Land where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

And what dearer words from those same lips can I wish for all of you, my Sisters? Whether it be that you are called out to meet difficulties, to face dangers, to encounter fatigue; ah, and even in that last and greatest difficulty, that last and most fearful danger, that battle, which once gained, struggle is at an end, than "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace!"

And now, &c.

SERMON XV.[1]

Tuesday after Ascension Day.

ELISHA'S STAFF.

"And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked."—2 Kings iv. 31.

I AM not about to speak to you of the mystical meaning of this miracle, wonderful as it is, at length. Elisha, the type of our LORD: the dead child, human nature, dead in trespasses and sins: the mother, the Church, pleading for her children at the Throne of GOD. Elisha first sent Gehazi: as our LORD first sent the law: sent Gehazi with his staff, as Moses was commissioned by his rod. The staff was impotent to raise the child to life, as you heard in the text: the law was unable to give spiritual life to the race of man: this, the law, S. Paul says, was unable to do, in that it was weak through the

[1] 1861.

flesh. Elisha therefore went himself: our LORD therefore left the throne of His FATHER, and the sweet songs of the Angels, and came into this world. Elisha stretched himself on the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and then the flesh of the child waxed warm. Our LORD took our nature upon Him, made Himself, so far as He could, like man; that is, was like to him in all things, sin only except: and *then*, and not till then, did there seem any sign of spiritual life; did the lost race open their eyes.

But you know all this, my Sisters, (at least I hope you do,) as well as I can tell you. So now I am rather going to speak to you of one or two of the details of the story, and see what they have to do with yourselves.

I said just now that the Shunammite was a type of the Church. She was so: but types of the Church are, as I have often said, types of all the members of the Church; types of her that has neither spot nor wrinkle nor any such thing, are more especially types of those, of whom, in the kingdom of Heaven, the hymn tells us,—

> "Virgin souls, by high profession,
> To the Lamb devoted here,
> Strewing flowers in gay procession
> At the marriage feast appear."

Well; we see her at the knees of Elisha: we see her, apparently with her petition answered: Gehazi and the staff had been sent forward. But what did she say? "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." You may not have caught the whole force of that expression. Let us see what it means, and see, too, how it applies to you. "'As the LORD liveth, and as Thy soul liveth, I will not leave Thee.' Because of that great love of GOD the FATHER, by which He gave His SON, His only SON, His Delight, the Brightness of His Glory, and the express Image of His Person, therefore not for one moment will I leave Him. 'As Thy soul liveth,'—that soul of which Thou didst say, 'My life is full of trouble, and my soul draweth nigh unto hell,' that soul so sore troubled, that human soul which was not from everlasting, but which was given Thee at the very same time when, as it is written, a body was prepared for Thee, as that soul now liveth in glory, liveth reunited to the glorified body from which some few hours it was separated, liveth, *this* no more to taste of sorrow, and *that* never to return to corruption: as Thy soul liveth, my LORD, and my King, I will not leave Thee."

You see how we take it for granted of you. What do we say daily of you while you are away

from home? "So they two went on together." That which is my greatest comfort for all of you, believing it true, believing that He Who has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," is with you now among the poor, as once He was in the poor cottages of Galilee or Jewry. But if it were not so, could there be a sadder condemnation of that unhappy Sister, could there be a bitterer satire on her weakness, than that we should thus speak of her union with CHRIST, whereas, in very truth, she was trying to go on by herself?

But now, something else. Why did Elisha, instead of going himself at once to Shunem, send Gehazi? There may be more reasons than one. He might (being a man of like passions with ourselves,) have been, to use S. Paul's expression, exalted above measure with the abundance of his miracles, and thought that anything he did must command the unseen world. Or, the failure might have lain, not in him, but in Gehazi. The staff in the hand of a faithful servant, might have sped on its errand. At the same time, observe, had this been so, it would have been the most stupendous miracle ever wrought. In all the cases of raising the dead, there has been, so to speak, personal contact with the corpse, (why, presently,) except in that most omnipotent and glorious command, "La-

zarus, come forth!" And even then, the LORD willed that the stone should first be rolled away. See. In the widow of Sarepta's case, Elijah stretched himself on the child. In the story of the man whom they laid in Elisha's grave, his body touched the prophet's bones. Our dear LORD Himself, when He would raise Jairus' daughter, took her by the hand, before He said, "Talitha cumi:" when He would call back the son of the widow of Nain, He came and touched the bier. When S. Paul would raise Eutychus, he came down and embraced him. In the miracle wrought by S. Peter on Tabitha, he knelt by the corpse first, and, mark you, gave her his hand, ere he lifted her up. None, save Elisha, attempted to call from death by a staff.

The third reason they give is that he thought perhaps to spare his labour. He was old,—probably infirm; if the less trouble should be sufficient to perform the same good, why take the more? And here is a lesson for you, to which I am coming presently. But first to say something on that personal contact of the dead. You will all of you, my Sisters, have to do, either with those who are dead in trespasses and sins, or with those, who (as children) have very little idea of the spiritual life. Now, if you mean to do them any good, you must put heart to heart, and soul to soul. It is all very well in its way

reading to them, catechising them, hearing their verses. Elisha's staff had great virtues, but it could not raise the dead; these things are excellent, and are duties, but they cannot excite the love of God. What would you say to any priest who, in hearing a confession, merely, as the old saying went, opened his mouth to absolve? You stand, if not in the place of priests, yet in the place of God's ambassadors, to those to whom you are sent; and, as I have said more than once, there is no greater sin in the sight of God than to shrink back because you are shy or reserved, in speaking as a loving Christian woman to those who profess themselves Christians. Believe me, I am not talking of what I do not understand. None of you can, by nature, be more shy than I am: and it clings to me to this day, that reserve in speaking, when I ought to speak, the word in due season which is so good. I speak more especially to those of you who are now first devoting yourselves to this work: because every time you allow yourselves to be tied and bound with the chain of this reserve, there is a fresh difficulty for the next. What? was it not enough for the prophet to lie on the child, and to put his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands? No, verily: nothing came of it the first, nor the second, nor the third time. He stretched himself on the

child seven times. So you: if you cannot make an impression in this way, try that; if not by that, try another; and by none better, believe me, than if you can show them by your own experience, yes, and by your own falls, that you understand what they feel, and can sympathise with them. I think you most of you know, of your own knowledge, that I practise what I preach.

Now to go on: and I have yet two things more to say. After the Shunammite had said, "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee," what was the consequence? He arose and followed her. O marvellous power of clinging to our LORD, that He should follow us, and not we Him! Is it not written, "Whosoever taketh not up his cross and followeth Me, cannot be My disciple?" "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" I have need to follow Thee, and dost Thou follow me? And so we have it in the Gospel: when Jairus had made that earnest supplication for his daughter, "JESUS arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples." So with you, my Sisters. If you only say, say with all earnestness, say with a resolution that nothing can break through, to Him Whose you are and Whom you serve, "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave Thee:" and if

He then sends you out to any labour, if He then gives you any set sphere of duty, is it not the consequence that He should follow you? He sends you there, yet He never will let a faithful soul that clings to Him be torn from Him. He must then follow you. "So they two went on together."

And again, notice this. When they were come into the house, it says, "Elisha went in *therefore*, and shut the door, and prayed unto the LORD." We often lose a great deal by not noticing the *therefores* in the Bible. Why did the prophet so intercede for the child? Because it is written, in the verse before, "The child was dead, and laid upon his bed." And now, my Sisters, if you desire the prayers of that great High Priest, of that mighty Prophet, Who ever liveth to make intercession for us, no way but this. You must be dead, and laid upon His bed. You must try to be dead to all those things which the world cares about, and which give so much trouble to keep down and to crucify, but above all things, you must be laid, *be* laid, (for you cannot do it for yourselves,) on that dear bed of the Cross. What does the Bride say? "By night, on my bed, I sought Him Whom my soul loveth, I sought Him, but I found Him not." Ah! but if she had begun, "By night, on *His* bed, I sought Him," the ending would

have been very different. There, on that Cross, He came to seek the Bride, and He found her; there, (for she is to be like Him in all things,) let His Bride seek for Him, and she shall surely find Him. It is a rough bed, a bed that often goes terribly against flesh and blood: but if your life is not the seeking Him there, what a cruel mockery to Him is the cross that rests on your breast! How, with its mute eloquence it will plead against you: "She has had the symbol before her eyes every hour of every day, but she never would endure the substance; she has put the typical cross round her neck every morning at rising, but the real Cross she continued to reject."

But rather, my Sisters, let me take the text of you thus. The child was dead; His child, His own dear child, so dearly loved, so fondly guarded, dead with Him, dead for Him, dead to the world, dead to herself, dead, by degrees, to her pet sins, to her besetting temptations; and laid by His own hands, for whose else could? on His bed; on the bed of His sufferings, yes, but of His glory also. But not for ever. The bed is but for the night, is it? During the night of this world, during the darkness and coldness of separation from Him, there you may lie safely, until, as we wrote on the coffin of the dear child whom we lately entrusted to His care, "until

the day break and the shadows flee away." But then Queen Esther shall sit down by the Heavenly Ahasuerus, on the Throne; when He shows to all people the riches of His glorious Kingdom, and the honour of His excellent Majesty, many days, even an eternity of them.

And now, &c.

SERMON XVI.

Ascension-tide.

FATHER, I WILL.

"FATHER, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."—S. John xvii. 24.

WAS there ever prayer like this before or since? "FATHER, I will!" What? He That offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him That was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared, here to declare not what He desired, but what He would? Never Saint spoke, or will speak, after this fashion: never the Saint of Saints, save this once.

And the matter, when we come to look at it, is as wonderful as the manner. "That they whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me"—not, where I am going, not, where I shall be, but—"where I am." And you may take it, my Sisters, in two senses.

You will presently be singing that great hymn of S. Thomas, where he tells how though the SON of GOD went forth, yet He left not His FATHER's side. It was like his accuracy as the first theologian of the Catholic Church, to put in that second line. For the first line is not his own. He borrowed it from a very much older hymn, which merely told of the LORD's going forth, and not of His also remaining. So it is as if, about to enter on His Agony, our dear LORD had said: "Even now, while the Chief Priests and Pharisees are sitting in council against Me, even now, while My betrayer is leading the band with lanterns and torches and weapons out of the city, still, there I am in the bosom of the FATHER, as from all ages. And where I am now according to My Divinity, where I shall soon be according to My Humanity, there I will that they also whom I love, and have loved from the beginning, may some day also be."

And could there be a greater proof of the love wherewith He loved us even unto the end, than this—that He should then *will* those to be with Him, of whom it is shortly after written, that He said to the multitude, "If ye therefore seek Me, let these go their way." And that, only that the saying might be true, "Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none." That, then, the

only way not to be lost, not to lose faith and apostatize altogether, to fly! "And they all forsook Him, and fled."

And we know that such an "*I will*" must stand for ever. Then said, probably, under the shadow of the Temple on that spring Paschal night, it stands as firm now on this Festival of Ascension-tide. Then said with reference to all the line of Saints and Martyrs and Confessors and Virgins, whom from eternity the King had foreseen as His, so it is said to you, my Sisters, now, if the latter clause (but then what an *if* that is!) belongs to you! If that be true, "those whom Thou hast given Me," then it must and shall come to pass, "I will that they be with Me where I am." And what better time than now, to-day, while it is called to-day, for each of you once more to see what right she has to believe that she is so given, and therefore of a certainty shall be in His Own good time for ever with the LORD?

That is a very lovely sense. But not, to my mind at least, as touching as the other. "FATHER, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." And where was that? In almost the depth of His humiliation: knowing Himself betrayed, knowing Himself about to be forsaken, seeing with a perfect vision of His Agony, His Cross: and still, "I

will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." What! in trial? in humiliation? in abandonment? with the Cross in view? with the petition, "O My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me?" Yes, it is so indeed. You cannot help understanding it thus. And the Apostle of the LORD afterwards taught what the LORD of the Apostles had said before. If there is one verse I have quoted to most of you, my Sisters, oftener than any other, I think it is that: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." So we read it in our Bibles; but in the very oldest copy of that Epistle, a little bit of which has only lately been discovered, it is written, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers *and dreadful* temptations." If I had been told of the two readings, and asked from the internal evidence alone, which were the true, I should have said that this was. No one but a Saint would have ventured to use such language: but I can easily imagine some copyist, weak of faith, afraid to write it down. And yet after all, what is the strength of S. James' meaning when compared to the "*I will*" of our LORD here?

"I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." And the more His Own, the more He would have them with Him: have them with Him, as that brave ser-

vant said to King David: "Wheresoever my lord the king shall be, whether in life or death, there also shall thy servant be." Now, when you take our LORD's words in the first sense: when you think of the many mansions, the new name, the hidden manna, the pillar that shall no more go out,—nay, when you go further, and desire, and pray for and are striving after a place among the hundred and forty and four thousand Virgin souls, you must not forget the second sense. If you are to be with Him there, you must be with Him here too; if you wish to be nearest to Him there, you must expect, and must try to wish, to be nearest to Him here too. If you are longing to be in that garden of lilies, among which the Lamb feeds, hereafter, you must make up your mind not only to divers, but to divers *and dreadful* temptations now. It was the good saying of a bad man, that prayer, suffering, and temptation make up a Priest. I am sure they make up a Sister. Then if you all can and do, in a certain sense, glory in suffering, why not in temptation too? Is it that one seems to have the appearance of sin, the other not? But then, if we say that, we should say—which GOD of His mercy forbid—that our dear LORD was nearer sin when tempted in the wilderness than when crowned with thorns! Is it that it seems to separate you more from Him? Not

one whit. In one sense, when in His active service, you are separated from Him; from His Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament; from Him in your hours; from Him, in great part, in your own prayers. But what then? You know, as I have often told you, that it is sometimes necessary to leave CHRIST for CHRIST'S work; and so you do it cheerfully. Now only look on the other, temptation, as equally CHRIST'S work; work done for Him, and work done by Him, and if you have not got far enough on to rejoice in it, at least you will acquiesce in it; at the very least, you will submit to it patiently.

S. Peter Damiani, preaching on this very subject, and, as I imagine, to a Religious House, on that text, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" says, "Oh, fools and slow of heart to believe! how could they perish unless He, according to His Humanity, perished too! And how can ye, poor trembling servants of CHRIST, walking though ye be in the darkness of this world's night, through rough places, how can ye fall if ye grasp Him by the Hand, unless He falls too! 'Then look up, and lift up your heads.' And when, forsooth? When men's hearts shall be 'failing them for fear' of the convulsions and troubles of the world. And why?—because then 'your redemption draweth nigh.'"

"FATHER, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." And there is something else to be remembered, which makes this saying, as applied to temptation, easier to accept, and you shall have it in other words than mine.

"How different would life appear if we could thus always grasp the whole plan of GOD's providence, could ever catch above the din of the struggle the echo of His cheering assurance, 'Behold, I come quickly. I am present with you, though invisible. Satan may do his worst; he may kill the body, but after that hath no more that he can do. In your *patience* possess ye your souls. All things are working together towards a mighty issue and a crowning result, and apparent defeat, little as you may think it, is often real victory. The number of the elect must first be accomplished, and then will the end be. I come quickly, and My reward is with Me.'

"We have lost sight, to a very injurious extent, of the fact that throughout the Bible, and especially the New Testament, not the day of our death, but the day of CHRIST's appearing, is ever put forward as the termination of all strife, and the consummation of bliss. In the interval the dead in CHRIST are 'blessed,' because 'they rest from their labours.' Their blessedness is

rather of a negative than a positive kind. Their condition is pictured to us as that of warriors who have returned to their native country with scars and loss of limbs, while the campaign in which they were engaged is still going on. They are relatively, but not absolutely, happy, for they are imperfect. They are within the undisputed and tranquil realm of their rightful King; they breathe the fresh air of their childhood's sky: they see the faces and hear the voices, and are gladdened with the society of their friends; they enjoy a serene rest, whose deep repose nothing further can disturb; they are divided from the din and peril of the conflict by a broad ocean which no foe can pass; they are in the beautiful suburbs of the royal City, but they are not yet summoned to the Presence Chamber of the Great King, to receive the reward of their valour and the decorations of victory; they are not yet invited to sit down in the banquet-hall; they receive comforting promises and accessions of bliss, and are bidden to 'rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren . . . . shall be fulfilled.' "

So now, here is a new starting-point in Christian warfare for each of you, a new opportunity for you to take that my most favourite verse on your lips, "Then I said, Now have I begun;"

and all the more so, because of that great festival to which we are looking forward.

And GOD give you grace, my dearest Sisters, to come to it better and better yearly, with purer and holier hearts; for JESUS CHRIST'S sake.

And now, &c.

SERMON XVII.[1]

Whitsun Day.

FIRE AND SACRIFICE.

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house."—2 Chron. vii. 1.

GENERALLY, my Sisters, I have found myself, on this great festival, in some foreign minster, going with the multitudes of them that keep holyday. Those glorious cathedrals, and glorious services, they do not, they ought not to, touch me so much, as the being with you here, and now, on the Feast of love and wisdom and courage; of the love which we must above all other things seek,—of the wisdom that, at this time even more than others, we so much need,—of the courage, which next to the queen grace of love, is the making of a Sister.

Now look at the text. And when did our

[1] 1861.

Solomon, He Who is the True King of peace, —He Whose dominion is, of a verity,—from the river to the ends of the earth,—He Who indeed built the House of the LORD, Himself the foundation, Himself the corner-stone,— when did our Solomon make an end of praying? In one sense, thank GOD, never! In one sense His intercessions for us are renewed day by day, and hour by hour. If the Sacrifice has long since been accomplished, done and over, on the great altar of burnt-offering on Calvary, that of the sweet savour from the golden altar of incense in the Heavenly Sanctuary, now and evermore goes up. But in another sense, our Solomon made an end of His prayer of sorrow, His prayers that were accompanied with strong crying and tears, in the same night in which He gave the promise of the Comforter. "I pray for them," He said then. He prayed indeed: in Gethsemane; from the Cross. He reappeared, to give to His Apostles, and by them to us, the peace His prayers had won. He ascended into Heaven, that the Paraclete might come down. "Now, when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven."

It came down at the third hour: and it came down for three causes. To enlighten? Most surely: He shall lead you into all truth. To inflame? Most certainly: He shall kindle

you into all love. And what else? Why, the text tells you. "The fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices."

So here: each of you has her sacrifice ready; has her offering, whatever it may be, for the King of kings. Is it worthy of His acceptance in itself? Daily you say, "Though we are unworthy to offer unto Thee any sacrifice." The celestial fire must fall: the HOLY GHOST must descend: and then, as when the angel touched the hard rock with the staff, the fire sprang from it; so your hearts—so all our hearts, hard and cold as rock, shall be kindled into the fire of love: that love which no waters of temptation and tribulation can ever quench.

Then, my Sisters, the question for you is, Are these sacrifices of yours really ready? Long ago, it might have been answered: "What more can they give than they have given? What more can they do than they are doing? Why teaze them to new efforts, when already they have so exerted themselves?" Well; and in one sense, it is true. The lily of chastity you have vowed to transplant spotless and unstained into the heavenly garden. The myrrh of self-denial you have promised in oblation to Him Whose infant Hands received it, as a sign of the works they should afterwards be employed in,—Whose pre-

cious Body was swathed in it as the symbol of immortality. The gold of love you have dedicated to Him: of love to Him, when He comes among you under the form of Bread and Wine, of love to Him when you send your hearts and thoughts and prayers up to the heaven where He now is: of love to Him in His poor, when in their likeness, and speaking with their voice, He asks for your help.

But these sacrifices—each of them involves the oblations of every day: new offerings, now first called for: new efforts, which could not before have been made. Now ask yourselves, my Sisters, ask yourselves with your full strength of earnestness, with your full force of love: "Is there any duty lying before me,—or which might possibly be before me,—which yet goes so terribly against flesh and blood, that I *know* I should decline it, were it presented to me?" And if there be, what joy to you is this day? True, the HOLY GHOST descends: true, He comes, no longer at a distance, far above you, as on Sinai, but into the very chambers of your own hearts as in Jerusalem. But to what purpose if He comes to kindle your sacrifice, and the sacrifice is not there? Why: see in the very Psalms what follows. "His lightnings gave shine unto the world:" there you have the enlightenment, but nothing more; no inflaming of love;

no kindling of sacrifice. And so the result was "the earth saw it, and was afraid." The God of Love came down; and the consequence was fear: the sweet source of all fruitfulness and all holiness, descended,—and the word *afraid* is all that His coming gives us, as the result.

But I believe better things. Look still in your own hearts; each of you, dear Sisters: and as you look, ask: "What is the hardest sacrifice that in the course of God's providence I am likely to be called to make?" That is the first question; and the second is: "Do I believe that I should make it?" And what answer? Is it, "'Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee:' Thou knowest that, loving Thee, I must needs do what Thou wouldest have me do, bear what Thou wouldest have me bear, give what Thou wouldest have me give?" Oh, happy, happy Sister, if this be so indeed! Or would the answer be: "I cannot tell. I sometimes hope that I should have the courage. I wish to have it; I long to have it: but then again I look at the difficulty, or the pain, or the disagreeableness, and I feel as if I might give way." Is it so? Then ought you not to pray? to go on praying: to pray with every faculty of the mind as constantly as the Confessors, as earnestly as the Martyrs: till you have gained resolution to make the sacrifice?

For see to what it leads: "The fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices: and"—what comes next?—"*and* the glory of the LORD filled the house." Oh, my Sisters, those houses of your hearts, ought they not thus to be filled with the glory and holiness of to-day? Every dark corner in them enlightened, every polluted chamber in them hallowed: the cold turned into heat, the hard made soft? "The glory of the LORD *filled* the House." Ah me! what a saying is that! Not merely: The glory of the LORD shone on the House, or enlightened it, or entered it, but filled it. And if that *filled* it, everything else fled from it. No room then for any thought of selfishness, if the Holy Spirit of Love occupies all. No room for one imagination of impurity, if the Holy Spirit of Discipline vindicates the whole. No lurking place for one morsel of ignorance, when the HOLY GHOST, the LORD of Wisdom, occupies every corner!

"The glory of the LORD filled the House." And, my Sisters, what glorious houses those might be, those which your grey dress marks out for GOD! Ah me, what perpetual services might there be going on! what noble sacrifices of faith and patience there offered, what sweet music of love thence ascend to heaven! for remember that saying of S. Leo, which we hear in

the midnight service of Christmas Eve. "Acknowledge and realise thy dignity, O Christian!" But what would he have said, had those then existed who like yourselves are set apart for the LORD's work, are not only His Houses, which all Christians are, but His Churches; more especially set apart, more solemnly dedicated. With what a deeper meaning would he have exhorted you to realise your dignity! How would he have held that the glory of the LORD should fill such temples!

It is not many weeks since we stood by our Solomon, when He made His last earthly prayer: "That they all may be one, as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them,"—just as it is written here, "the glory of the LORD filled the House,"—"that they may be one, even as We are One; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me!"

And now, &c.

SERMON XVIII.[1]

Whitsun Day.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT'S WORK.

"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!"—Isaiah lxiv. 1.

And even to-day this prayer has been fulfilled. The heavens have been rent, and the fire of the Lord has fallen; the fire, not of indignation, but of love; not the executor of vengeance on Sodom, but the minister of peace in Jerusalem; not the consumer of the captains of fifty with their fifties, but the strengthener of the leaders of the Church's army; not even as the flame that burnt Elijah's victim, but the consecration of the Apostolic band into holy and reasonable sacrifices.

"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens!" In one sense, it was done once that it might be done for ever. The Word made Flesh taber-

[1] 1864.

nacled among men for a season, and then gloriously returned; the Paraclete came not to tabernacle, but to abide for ever: came to take possession of this mortal body as His consecrated temple, came never to return till they that have kept those temples holy for Him shall be built up together in the House not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

But in another sense, that Pentecostal coming down was the first of what myriads of blessed descents! of how many a consecration of the waters of Baptism into a deliverance from the power of Satan! of how many a brooding over the elements of Bread and Wine, (as the Church expresses it, by His all-holy and good and glorious presence,) making them the Body and Blood of the LORD, the Bread of Angels, the Wine of Immortality! How many a time has He descended on a poor weak priest, enabling him, a sinner himself, to forgive the faults of others: himself needing absolution, to declare to others, "I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST." "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens!" The glorious prayer has been gloriously fulfilled.

"That the mountains would flow down." Shall we take them of those enormous difficulties which from time to time oppose the course of

every Christian man, or of such a body as ours, or of a national Church, or of the Church Catholic herself? That is a noble line in one of our older poets with regard to the Incarnation,

"Through mounts of miracles God broke a way."

He did so then, but not then only. When we think of that "rushing mighty wind," let us think also of the effect wrought by its type on Mount Horeb when Elijah was there: "a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD." My Sisters, in speaking of difficulties, it is natural that our thoughts should fix on one especial difficulty, that great work which we have now taken in hand. It is a great comfort to turn away for a time from lists and subscriptions and collecting boxes and begging tours; and to fix them, not on the means, but on the GOD of means; to remember that now, as ever, "Thou art the GOD that doeth wonders;" that now, as ever, if we have but faith, it will be, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."—(Where, remember, the difficulty was of the same kind as ours, the finding a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty GOD of Jacob.) It is a great consolation to know that that very same power which gave to the Twelve, boldness, and zeal, and energy, and

power to build the Spiritual Temple, that very same Paraclete will, but by our own lack of faith, be with us now, while we attempt to rear up the temporal building. Is that a lowering of our thoughts? is that to give cause for any mean idea of His influence? God forbid! This is the very thing which to me is so comforting, that the work of that first Pentecost, "when they were all with one accord in one place," and this work which we are now attempting, are both one. Little or great, is anything too little for His dear love, Who sent the Comforter to-day? Is anything too hard for His omnipotence Who by the humiliation of Passion-tide brought to pass the glory of Pentecost?

But, while I am still speaking of that, let me, my Sisters, say one thing as regards ourselves. We may try, pray, send, advertise, do every thing in every way we can about this dear new House: we may look forward to it, with its sharply gabled chapel, where I hope so many and many an earnest prayer will be sent up, long after we have fallen on sleep; where, and many a time, to Sisters yet unborn, the Bread of the mighty, and the Wine that blossoms into virgins, will be offered, when the hands that have so often, by God's love, fed *you*, are merely skeleton frames, or have mouldered quite into dust; we may look forward to all that, with our mind's eye,

as that which shall be when, under GOD, we shall have raised that great, massy, necessary house, with its cloister, where, I hope, many a dear thought will suggest itself, many a dear word will pass between those that love each other dearly; that great building, indeed, for, to take Solomon's brave words on our lips, (and we may so take them, since it is for GOD, not for *you*, that we are about to erect this quadrangle,) "the house that I build shall be exceeding magnifical."

Well, think each of you, (I say it to myself, as well as, perhaps more than, to any one of you,) if it is to be by prayer, by honest hard work, by the performance of what you, more than others, have promised, in a way in which others cannot join, if it is thus that GOD of His infinite love may bend down His ear to hear us: remember that for every help there is its opposite hindrance, for every work that assists, a work that hinders. Prayer, self-denial, obedience, humility, watching,—all these assist even the temporal house yet to be begun, as well as that Spiritual House so long ago begun in each of you, so long ago, too, set on foot in this dear Sisterhood. But any one sin wilfully yielded to, may it not in the same way hinder, not the Sister alone, not the general spiritual life of her Sisters only, but also this our great wish too?

And do you call that a low motive? He Who knew what was in man, (and this is, to me, one of the most remarkable of all that dear LORD's teachings,) used, Himself, a comparatively low motive in that parable, or whatever it may be called, about taking the highest place. Distinctly He lays the stress on this, the honour or dishonour among the guests. And therefore even a motive infinitely lower than a Sister's highest motive, may most righteously be used with you now. First, beyond all measure first, strive to build up the spiritual temple that ought to be rising within each of your own hearts, but also (and no mean argument neither) labour thus for the sake of that building which we hope so soon to see rising for the Sisterhood indeed, but firstly and chiefly for the Bridegroom of the Virgins.

And there is one thing more which I ought not to shrink from saying. Exactly as the Western Church, now for some 1400 years, has chosen Whitsun Week as one of her Ember seasons, to the end that her new priests then chosen might have the outpouring of the HOLY GHOST more fully shed on them during the Octave of His descent, so you, too, will have to make your own election[1] during the ensuing week. Do not think that you stand alone among

[1] Triennial election of Superior.

Sisterhoods in shrinking from, in dreading, in being more than nervously anxious, and unhappy about its time. I have always told you, therein following their examples whose names are not to be classed but with the very highest, how every Religious House is, in its small way, a type of the Church, just as each Christian soul is a type of both one and the other. What do you think that the Apostles, then most truly orphans, felt in their election of S. Matthias? You will of course answer, "They cast lots." It was so. But remember: the number of the names together (probably in Jerusalem) was one hundred and twenty, the number of those who went to the mountain in Galilee was above five hundred brethren; out of these, two were chosen, —how, we cannot tell,—and then came the lot. The real election lay in that first choice; that choice of the two from, take it at the lowest, the five hundred; not in the one out of two.

Now, my Sisters, this I am bound to say: you never can be called on to do a more important work, momentary work, I mean, than this. As you will answer it hereafter, you are bound without any motive but one to give your vote as for the next three years you desire to see that work to which you have devoted yourselves, prosper, or not prosper. You have no more right to consider this as a thing that you may do or leave

undone, as you fancy, than you would have, being sent out to nurse, to do your best, or to do nothing, as might happen to fall in with your own wish. I have not the words before me, I wish I had: but I remember how, at one of the most important elections that ever took place in any Religious House, now some five hundred years ago, when the question was in fact, Shall laxity come in, or shall it not? S. Antony of Padua laid down the necessity of voting conscientiously in a way that I will not attempt to imitate. Only this, my Sisters: as GOD has so marvellously helped us hitherto, as He has increased our numbers in a proportion which I never should have dared to look for, as (for I hate false modesty) He has enabled you to do much that helps forward the general course of Religious Houses: above all, as you will have to answer hereafter for every absolution you have received in that poor little room, and much more, for every time you have been counted worthy of the Body that was broken, and the Blood that was shed for you on Calvary, I ask you,—but that is nothing; He expects you—to give your decision next Thursday, for His Love, and for His Love only.

And now, &c.

SERMON XIX.

Trinity Sunday.

THE LIKENESS OF THE DOVE.

"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove: that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold."—Psalm lxviii. 13.

For nearly a thousand years this festival was simply and only the Octave of Whitsun Day. Then, respect being had to the Lord's promise, that the mission of the Comforter should lead the disciples into all truth, the great truth of the Catholic Faith was commemorated as the fitting close to so great a feast, as the other extremity of the bright rainbow of grace. Be it so; yet I shall surely not go wrong if now I rather speak of the past than of the present Festival; if we dwell a little longer on His Work, Who is the Sanctifier of all sacred things, the Hallower of all holy days. Of Him I will speak, and I will speak of you also; of the temple of the Lord, no less than of the Lord of the temple; of the

shrine in which He dwells, and also of the glory which that shrine receives from His indwelling.

And first, my Sisters, notice that, Consubstantial and Co-eternal as they are, so those two most Blessed Persons of the ever-glorious TRINITY, the WORD and the SPIRIT, have each a similitude in their special works for man. The SON, for us and for our salvation, came down in Bethlehem; the HOLY GHOST descended in Jerusalem: the SON did not abhor to be included in the Virgin's womb; the SPIRIT, to be comprehended in the upper chamber: the SON manifested His glory in the Star to the Wise Men, and the midnight splendour to the Shepherds; the SPIRIT, in the cloven tongues like as of fire: the SON spake by the angelic bands from Heaven; the SPIRIT, by the Apostles on earth. Then again: for this purpose is our dear LORD exalted to the right hand of power, that He may constantly intercede for us, as He once died for us; that He, the Priest and Victim, may offer His own sufferings and death with the prevailing incense of His own prayers. And the HOLY GHOST also is our ceaseless Intercessor. The groanings which cannot be uttered, oh, how do they stablish the thing that He has wrought in us! how, in His glorious temple in the Heavenly Jerusalem does He make mention of His poor unworthy temples on earth? These, O Blessed

Spirit, God of all love as well as of all power, are Thine own especial temples; especially commemorate them before the Throne of Grace. Keep them pure for the Son of God, keep them pure for Thyself; so kindle the fire of Thy Love on their Altars, that it may never go out!

Well, my Sisters, and as the great aim of every Christian life, and more especially of yours, is to be made more and more like our dear Lord, so here David tells you of another aim; another shall I call it, or the same? the being made like the Holy Ghost. "Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove." Why the *wings* of a dove presently; but first, here is the command or rather the promise, that like that Dove you shall be.

And shall we not see in the dove sent out from the ark a type of this most blessed and loving Dove? Surely yes. First, that dove was sent forth, and returned, without accomplishing anything, to the ark. Then she brought back the olive leaf in the evening. Then she departed, and returned not again any more. Let the ark be the type of the only safe and peaceful dwelling, the Heavenly City. Three times, so to speak, the Holy Ghost was sent forth from that. First, in the old days before the flood. Then He tarried, as we may express it, but a little time on earth. With Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob He tabernacled awhile; "but in the evening," towards the close of the Patriarchal Dispensation, He seemed to have forsaken the world, and once more to have left it to its own wickedness and gloom. Then again He descended in the Jewish Dispensation. And just as the olive branch, valueless in itself, was yet the pledge and earnest of better things, so this Blessed Spirit made the Law, as S. Paul tells us, the shadow of good things to come; the pledge of that future Kingdom wherein peace was to dwell; the cropped-off olive branch of the land above. And then once more, and for the last time, the HOLY GHOST descended from Heaven on the Day of Pentecost: and, as the dove returned no more to the ark, so neither did this glorious Comforter leave the world again, according to our LORD'S most true promise, "That He may abide with you for ever."

And this Dove we are to resemble; and I need not tell you, dearest Sisters, in what above all other things; your name and office themselves teach you. If He is the Comforter, the true Comforter, the one Source whence every stream of comfort proceeds, you, in your various ways, and according to the power He gives you, are to be comforters also. You know the story of Abælard and Heloisa: how, after their most deep, but most sinful love, when it pleased GOD

to open their eyes, and to give them the grace of conversion, the Convent which they founded, which she governed and he directed, was called the Paraclete. A happy name, I have always thought, for a Religious House; a blessed character for all that dwell in it. Your motto ought to be, none can be more fitting: "That we may be able to comfort others with the Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of GOD." Thus like Him Who, that He may comfort, being all-pure, comes into hearts so impure; being all-holy, exposes Himself to the contact of the sinner; being all-true, dwells in a world of such deceit; and why? only that He may prove the truth of His Name. Oh what thousand kinds of misery, and only One Comforter! Oh how much does that Comforter every day and hour and minute endure, that He may make good His title, and be the Very Paraclete!

But now, why does it rather say, as the *wings* of a dove, than as the dove only? And there are three reasons. When the bird stretches out its wings, it reposes as it were on the air; when it spreads out its wings, it makes the sign of the Cross; when it spreads out its wings it rises, or at least advances in its course. Now, as you know, of all the types of the HOLY GHOST, air or wind is the most common; nay rather, in Hebrew and Greek and Latin the

word for breath or air, and spirit, is the same, as to a certain extent it is with us. That blessed Spirit then is the breath on which the wings of your love and your hope must rest. Depend upon it, Satan will try with all his might to pull you back again to earth. Will try? he *does* try; he does often succeed; and how those wings must exert themselves before the *Sursum Corda*, "Lift up your hearts," can be fulfilled! They must exert themselves indeed, but they can succeed only in and by Him. Place a bird in an exhausted receiver, and it would flap its poor wings in vain: try without the Paraclete to send your thoughts heavenward, and oh how miserably and feebly you will fail. Well; and then the wings, when extended, make the sign of the Cross. And thus it is that the Comforter is so for this very reason, and by these very means, that He is, as S. Paul says, the witness of the sufferings of the LORD JESUS. He could not be given till JESUS was glorified; because, without the sufferings and oblation of the Lamb, never could have been the gentle voice of the Dove. He comforts, indeed, but it is by means of Calvary. The Cross is stamped on all His consolations. It is not the Dove only, but the wings of the Dove. And here you must be like Him too. That blessed Cross, as it is all your hope and all your desire, so it must be all the comfort

that you set before others. O, dear Sisters, how I wish that you were all more and more transfigured to the likeness of that Cross! You are growing like, I know it; on the whole, you are succeeding, I believe it; but why ever fail? Why any of you ever so act as they would act, who were not signed with this mark, who were not servants of the thorn-crowned Head? Every failure in the Bride, is it not, so far as to Him grief can now exist, is it not a sorrow to the Bridegroom? Yes, if Good Friday beyond other days preaches to us the Doctrine of the Cross, Whitsuntide in its measure tells us of the same: "yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove."

In one of the first visitations of the early Ursulines, when the Superior-General was going the round of her houses, there was one which struck her, beyond all the others, as a model of love and purity and obedience. Three years passed, and another visitation came on, and still this convent held its pre-eminence among the rest. So the Mother was asked to what she attributed it. "Do you give more time to prayer than other Houses?" "No." "Do you exercise more self-denial?" "I think not." "Do you spend more time before the Blessed Sacrament?" "No." "Then what is the cause of your advance?" "Perhaps it is that after Compline we always say the Litany of the Holy

Ghost." And it was forthwith made a law among French Ursulines to this day. And surely the Holy Ghost has marvellously blessed that order, as marvellously, as I was telling you the other day, as Satan has persecuted it.

"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove: that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold."

But what of those who, to a certain degree, are already covered with silver wings of purer lustre, with the feathers of gold of eternal glory? Yes, the Voice of the Turtle is there everlasting, not as here, a gleam of sun, and it sings to us, then a dark cloud and driving hail, and it takes refuge where we cannot come. Yes, we may well catch courage from those happy ones, the athletes once, the spectators now, the imperilled then, the safe ones now. As the hymn so beautifully says,

"One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire,
'Friends watch us who have touched the goal,'
'They urge us, come up higher.'
'With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ.'—'They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb.'

"There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,

The lost so long are found again,
Long lost, but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With JESUS CHRIST our Best."

And so may that Blessed TRINITY, to Whom, in common with all the Western Church, we dedicate this day, give you all those feathers like gold, raise you up by the Blessed SPIRIT, that Wind which bloweth where It listeth, to the streets of gold, to the sea of pure gold, as it were transparent glass; and where in those never-fading gardens, and from the midst of the Tree of Life, the Voice of the Turtle is heard, not imperfectly, not brokenly, but without variation in its sweetness, without check to its continuance.

And now, &c.

SERMON XX.[1]

Trinity Sunday. Evening.

THE THREEFOLD CORD.

"And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."—Eccles. iv. 12.

THAT which first strikes me, dear Sisters, in our verse, is this;—how completely it seems to recognize war and strife as a necessary, as an everyday state. Prevail—overcome—broken! and then that mysterious *him*, repeated in two different senses. If at any time it should be peace, is it not now? on the calm evening of a Sunday, that Sunday a festival, and so far as I myself am concerned, a long weary journey just over, I, reunited to those with whom I am in a thousand ways bound,—and that in the very presence of Him,—of His very Body and Blood, Who is the Joy of Angels, and the Prince of Peace. And yet I take a text about war!

Truly yes: always, everywhere, whatever be

[1] 1860.

the circumstances, whoever the companions, the camp of the Philistines is pitched before us, and Goliath comes forth from it to challenge us. And by ourselves, are we strong enough for one day or one hour to resist him? What do our confessions tell about that, except that when we would do good, evil is present with us?

Now you know very well, dearest Sisters, that of the many verses in the Old Testament which, as in a glass dimly, set forth the most blessed doctrine of this day, none is more striking than the present text, about "the threefold cord which is not quickly broken." "If one," that is, Satan, "prevail against him:" against whom? To say it with all reverence, against our most dear and Blessed LORD. For so, in a certain degree, and for a certain time, he did. "Thou shalt bruise His heel." He prevailed against our dear LORD's Humanity; but then, "two shall withstand him." With that Human Nature, that nature, sister to ours, that nature, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that nature, subject to every infirmity of ours,—pain, weakness, fear,—was joined together, never to be divided, the Almighty WORD, the Beginning, of Whom it is written, "In the Beginning GOD created the heavens and the earth;" and two shall withstand him indeed! Witness that first Easter night! witness the burst rocks, and

the overthrown guard: that those Two, the Two Whom God had united together, and man could not put asunder, resisted him,—him the prince of darkness,—him with all his powers and works and arms indeed!

"And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." So from the beginning, they have seen that golden and everlasting cord of the creating Father and redeeming Son and regenerating Spirit, taught here by the true Solomon. But, in speaking to those who in their time had assumed the same life which you are leading now, those your Sisters in the religious life here, and your Sisters still, but your intercessors and petitioners also in that happier life on high, holy men of old saw much more than this. They saw the threefold cord with which you are bound, from which you never can be loosed: that triple chain of poverty, chastity, and obedience; and they saw it, and spoke of it, in connexion with each of the three ever blessed Persons of the Eternal Trinity. Poverty: and they raised their eyes to that Father of Whose fulness we all receive; the treasures of Whose grace you desire to seek, by renouncing the poor treasures of this world. Obedience: and they spake of Him, Who, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered: Him Who said, "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God. I am

content to do it, yea, Thy law is within My heart." And Chastity led them to raise their hearts and words to the SPIRIT of Purity; of Him by Whose operation the Ever-Virgin became the most blessed of Mothers; of whom it was written, "Therefore also that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the SON of GOD."

"A threefold cord is not quickly broken." In all helping, and in all helped, each of those blessed graces gives and takes strength from its two sisters. Purity, and humility, and love (for thus, in religious language they are called,) set forth by so many trinities of GOD's people of old! Mediæval writers love to dwell on this. Look at Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham gives up everything at GOD's call,—home, possessions, country,—going out, not knowing whither he went: the true spirit of poverty. Isaac, submitting himself to his father's knife, without a struggle or a prayer, though alone, though in the prime of youth and strength; bearing the wood for the offering up that mount: and was not that obedience? And Jacob: "thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel:" now Israel is, by interpretation, he that sees GOD. And who is he that sees GOD? "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see GOD;" and there you have chastity. Or notice again: when

the wilderness was to be passed and Canaan to be won, who were the leaders of GOD's elected people? "I sent before thee Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam." There they see these graces again: in weary travel and dangerous struggle; and not less again prefigured by the three Maries who came to weep at the LORD's Tomb. "A threefold cord is not quickly broken."

And yet, dearest Sisters, more remarkably. Wherever you would go with your dear LORD, under whatever circumstances, to whatever end, then these three graces must be your Peter, and James, and John, during the days of your pilgrimage. John, the Virgin Disciple, does he not stand for Chastity? Peter, who said, "LORD, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee," for Poverty? and James was the first to manifest his Obedience unto death. Well then; when you go to the house of sorrow, that threefold band must be with you, as the three Apostles among those that wept and lamented greatly in the dwelling of Jairus. Would you try, by the eye of faith, to see somewhat of the glory of Him Whom you love, even while yet in this world; of that form, which, though so marred more than any man, is yet fairer than the children of men? These graces alone can lead you to Him, even as the three elect Apostles alone ascended to the Mount of Transfiguration. Or

if you would go with Him to the darkest and saddest of His scenes,—still, by no other help but these can you draw near, even as those three Apostles, and they only, followed Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

How often I have spoken to you of each member of this threefold band! How often here, how often at that more solemn time, when so far as a human soul can be touched and seen in its very reality, so far confession lays it open. And now more than ever, this I would ask of you. To think no matter of Obedience little. As I have told you, I have spoken much and often with those who are engaged in the same life as yourselves, who carry it on with the tradition of centuries; and this is the one thing on which they dwell, the one thing they urge. For the love of JESUS CHRIST, Obedience. The lesser the matter, the greater the grace, because done only for Him. That it is the breath of the Religious life. That it is the sun of the Religious system. And this, of all that was said, used to make the greatest impression upon me, because it was urged under such very different circumstances, and in each, spoken from the heart. The Abbot, the mitred and decorated Abbot of a learned House of Benedictines, spoke; and said that whatever apparent success there might be for a time, it could not last without Obedience.

The Prior of a poor desolate convent of Franciscans spoke,—no continued blessing without Obedience. The Mother of a Dominican House spoke,—and her earnestness brought the tears into her eyes,—It may seem for a while as if God were blessing you without Obedience; but it is a false appearance; it is the gourd that will wither as soon as the sun is up.

If I dwell most on that of all the three graces, it is because, of itself, as you know, it seems that the sin of neglecting it is least. As to the sister graces: a little sin against purity there cannot be; and self-denial you know at once and see to be the means of making you like the Bridegroom of the Virgins. But it is so natural to think that there *can* be a little sin against obedience; some offences against it seem so little, even though they are habitual. Never think it, it is impossible. Now then: you have all a fair opportunity of turning over a new leaf—of commencing a new life. Deprived for so long of your daily Celebration, God is giving it back to you. What will you give Him in return? To you, you for yourselves, you by yourselves, you His too often faithless brides: to you He gives the Food of Angels, the Manna that comes down from Heaven; He gives it without your having to go forth and seek it: "He let it fall in the midst of their tents and round about

their habitations." Now, "What reward shall I give unto the LORD for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?" I will tell you. Resolve at once on carrying out more fully, on exercising more lovingly than ever before, the grace of Obedience. Will you not make this determination? Only try, and you will see how it will smooth down difficulties; only try, and you will see how it will make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain: that, carried out as it might be, it would make a little Paradise of this house.

And how can you *but* try, when you fix your eyes on this Altar? When you behold, not clad in the purple of the Conqueror, not glittering with gold and gems as a King, but under the form of bread, the very form of Him Who was the pattern and model of perfect obedience? Obedience to the FATHER *that* He came, obedience to us, His rebellious servants, *while* He came. You are surrendering everything: pleasure, ease, free will, the disposition of yourselves, power over your daily actions—and all for what? To be like Him: is it not? And how can you be more like Him, what briefer and more compendious way of His similitude, than obedience?

You know not, dearest Sisters, how deeply, how earnestly, I feel this,—more so now than ever before. I knew before the truth of what I

now say; but it never had been so brought home to me as almost daily now it has been since I left you. How everything that I have heard or seen, in religious houses that I might almost reckon by scores, has proclaimed to me: This, for the sake of Jesus; This, in His Name Who is the God of obedience; This, or nothing; This, and everything must come right.

A happy evening this is to me, that sees me once more with you in the little oratory that I love best of any place in the world! I believe, dearest Sisters, that we all feel this; that we all rejoice in the prospect of unintermitted services, and daily Sacrifices. For my part, this is my earnest prayer, and you must pray it for me, that it may not be with me as it was with Hezekiah, of whom it is written, that he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him. I have especially, this time, to be thankful for deliverance from some dangers of which I do know; as well as, very probably, from more that I do not know. And oh that it may be to this end! that I may lead you more and more faithfully in the King's Highway: very willingly spend and be spent for you in the King's great battle! And you, if you also are thankful,—I have told you how to show your thankfulness,—and, if I so see it done, oh how my joy will be increased!

And so now you will receive His Blessing with renewed trust, dearest Sisters; with increased hope, and with holier resolutions, as I well trust, for the future. That Blessed TRINITY, without Whom there can be no blessing, knows no limit to His giving but your desires. He That created you is ready to uphold you: He That rose for you, to raise you up together with Him: He that dwelleth in you, more and more wholly to sanctify His Temple, making it a meet shrine for Himself. "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." What device of Satan can prevail against the Wisdom, what effort against the Might, what hatred against the Love, of the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST? The first mystery that children learn to repeat, the highest wonder into which the triple trinity of the Angelic hosts desire to look. To that Wisdom, that Might, that Love, I commit you now and ever, my Sisters; now, in the danger and the storm and the battle, hereafter in the perfect security, in the undying spring, in the perpetual peace!

And now, &c.

SERMON XXI.[1]

Trinity Sunday.

NOW AND THEN.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."—S. John xiii. 7.

Jesus said,—yes, but each Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity also says it to-day,—says it, as they remark, in two ways: What I am, and what I do, thou knowest not now. Indeed I know of no more striking, no more comforting text than this, for the last Sunday Festival of the Christian year.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Let the Father, from the thick darkness of brightness where He is enthroned, so speak to us. And then He tells us of our creation that has been, and of our re-creation in the churchyard which, for long future years, is to be. Do we know how He works in us and by us: giving our will its power over

[1] 1861.

the nerves, giving each joint of the body its intercommunion with, and interdependence on the rest? Do we know how He is at this moment reorganising the frames of those we have lost and who sleep in Him: say of our two Sisters whom we have sent as the first-fruits of this house to Him, preparing them for their future glory and honour and immortality? Cast one glance on that unmarked grave in our churchyard,[1] imagine for one moment what would be the sight that would meet your eyes could you penetrate the turf, and the mould, and the coffin: and then also fancy, only with the glass of faith, what figure will, at the latter day, stand by the side of that grave: how perfect, how beautiful, how shining a form: and then you can better understand the words of the great Workmaster, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

And has not all the course of our Festivals and Fasts from Christmas to Ascension taught us to hear the Voice of the SON uttering these words? Think of Joseph, how his mind must have been torn with misery, when it became only too plain, to a merely earthly eye, that she, guardian of whose purity he had been chosen, witness of whose vow in the temple he had been appointed, had cast that purity to the winds, had

[1] Memorial crosses were not then allowed there.

utterly rejected her vows, and would be an outcast only to be pitied and forgotten: having risen so high, to fall so low. And what other comfort had he than this: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter?" Notice how little explanation the Angel gave him; that night vision assured him of his bride's spotlessness, but not a word more. How the great miracle was performed, how the Incarnation was wrought, that he knew as little as we do!

And when, some twelve years after, she, then, and not then for the first time, well earning her title of Mater Dolorosa, spent those three days in the miserable search of caravans and city, and at length found Him Whom she held dearer than life in the temple, what was all the reply she received? "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My FATHER's business?" "And they understood not," says the Evangelist, "the saying which He spake unto them." Well, again: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Save that they came from those lips which spake as never man spake, how little of comfort! the business of an unknown Father; the future years of life no more to belong to her who loved Him with more than the love of a mother, but to be dedicated to a secret work.

And then, sorer disappointment still, the twelve

saw the crown of Israel almost within His grasp, the multitude ready to take Him by force, and make Him a king: and then the glory of His Transfiguration, so far beyond that of Solomon —as if to show how the deed of the people on earth was approved and glorified by GOD. And all this only the preface to: "The Son of Man shall be betrayed and mocked, and shall suffer many things of the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, and they shall crucify Him, and the third day He shall rise again." All this popularity among the people, all this celestial glory, when He was attended by the two great saints of the Old Testament: and all to end in the Cross! "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

And when we came on Good Friday to the Passion, was not that the same lesson? when we saw the Hands that had healed the sick, nailed to the bitter wood; when we saw the Feet that had walked triumphantly over so many obstacles, now powerless to stir; when we heard the Mouth that had power over the gates of death now uttering the sentences of mortal weakness, "I thirst," and again, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

And as with the FATHER, and the SON, so with the HOLY GHOST. How often has He led all of us by paths we have not known! Just

the very worst thing we feared has befallen us, and behold in a few weeks or months we see that it was *the* thing of all others we should, had we known all, have desired. Now surely we must perish, now certainly there is no hope left, now our last poor chance has gone out. And after all, it was only, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Dear Sisters: and there is another sense in which I think these words, spoken by the great High Priest before His Passion, must be very comforting to every priest. If an earthly priest is trying to do his best, trying to walk a straight way in a crooked road, endeavouring under difficult circumstances to keep the glory of his Master, and that alone, in view; and if, when so doing, some openly condemn him, others secretly think him wrong, others even of those who trusted him most, feel doubtful now; what then? why then, in the first place he hears his Master saying to him, "'What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter:' thou knowest not, nor shall I now tell thee, why I have thought fit to leave thee in these difficulties, to be mistaken by others, to be thought unkind where thou wouldest show most kindness. But did I not suffer the same thing? Is it not written of Me that neither did His brethren believe on Him? When I showed mercy to the publicans,

and to the woman that was a sinner, was not this My reward, that I should be called Beelzebub? And what then hast thou to complain of?"

And next, I think that priest may well take the words into his own mouth, and find a comfort in saying mentally at least to those that distrust him, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." He ought to be able to wait for this, for what is his whole life but a season of waiting? He ought to be able to be confident in this, for what is his existence but the exercise of trust?

"Thou shalt know *hereafter*." And then comes that impatient little word, When? When shall we know the meaning of GOD's dealings with us? Certainly not, in all cases, in this world. No doubt that will be one of the great joys of Heaven, in looking back on our earthly lives, to see how one thing fitted and dovetailed into another, so taking us safely home; how often, when we thought we were asking for bread, we were really praying for a stone; when it seemed as though we were beseeching GOD to give us a fish, we were in truth demanding a scorpion. Oh merciful *No*, that has so thwarted our dearest wishes! and what a wonderful hereafter that shall thus open the truth to us! It is said that when Peter the Great was on his deathbed, after receiving the last Sacraments of the

Church, he lay perfectly silent for some hours, occasionally only following with his eyes, (as we have most of us seen those in the agony of death do,) as if he saw, some figure, invisible to the bystanders. At last, mustering up all his strength, he said the one word, *Hereafter*, and immediately breathed out his soul. They wondered, (and who can tell?) what that *hereafter* meant, whether happiness or misery; whether he were thinking of himself, or of his country. But yet these words: "thou shalt know hereafter," take them in what sense you will, are very awful, as well as very comforting.

"'Thou shalt know hereafter,' for never canst thou understand here, what is the infinite weight of one sin, what is the infinite merit of one drop of the Blood of Calvary, what is the infinite value of one Sacrament. Thou shalt know hereafter how well spent was each labour, each toil, each sorrow, that helped to work out for thee the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled; and how infinitely well would ten times as much endurance have been laid out, how much better for thee hadst thou smitten the five or six times, instead of, like Joash, leaving off at the third. Thou shalt know hereafter what infinite waste of sorrow, waste of trouble, waste of perplexity was there, because thou couldest not trust Me in working out some one of the cases of thy life.

Oh, if thou couldest but have seen how all that scheming, and striving, and trying advanced not My designs one whit, but cast thee far back! how thy mistrust might, but for My loving-kindness, have marred My work, but could never have helped it!"

Then, I think we might learn another lesson of our dear LORD's humility. He vouchsafed, so to speak, to allow Himself to be mistaken. "Thou knowest not now!" But could not He, the GOD of Wisdom, have enlightened their understandings, so that they who were with Him and would misunderstand Him might have known? I do not speak of such wicked and wilful errors as, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub," but such (to all appearance) innocent mistakes as that of those who in replying to the Jews who spoke of our LORD as the Messiah said, "Doth CHRIST come out of Nazareth? Doth not Scripture say that He cometh out of Bethlehem?" not knowing that, in very deed, He did arise thence! And *we* think it *so* much to be mistaken. We fret and trouble ourselves and weary our very hearts, because such and such an action is misinterpreted, such and such a speech misrepresented. Ah me! how little we are like our dear LORD yet! As if that *hereafter* ought not to be enough for us all!

And yet again, lay the stress on that word, I *do*: "'What *I do*, thou knowest not now.' What I have done thou partly knowest." O LORD JESUS, so we do. We try to follow Thee, if faintly, and feebly, and afar off, yet we do try to follow Thee along that sorrowful way up the hill of Calvary; we try to stand by Thee as Thou art nailed to the Cross; we try to hear the dead heavy thud of the hammer, to see the sword that pierced the heart of the Virgin Mother, to stand close to Thee when the Cross itself is reared up, with the heavy jerk which fixes it in its appointed place, dislocating that precious Frame, so that, as it is written, "I may tell all My bones." We try to stand by the Cross when that miraculous darkness comes on; when a visible terror falls on the crowd; when the hardest hearts begin to confess, "Verily, this Man was the SON of GOD;" when Thou didst bow the Head and give up the Ghost; when from Thy most precious and pierced Side there came forth the Water and Blood.

What I did—all these things were. But "What I *do*." How little of that can we tell! My Sisters, when we offered the inestimable Sacrifice this morning, *how* did our LORD present it before the Throne on high? In what words did He make oblation to the FATHER of the Body and the Blood into which the HOLY GHOST

had changed the Bread and Wine? And how truly is every Sunday Trinity Sunday! The HOLY GHOST descends, at the words of an earthly priest descends, He changes the external elements into the Body and Blood of the SON of GOD; and then in His turn the same SON presents that sacrificed Body and Blood to the FATHER; to the FATHER, as FATHER. But how He does this, but how He hears the feeblest sigh of prayer that has ever risen from those desks, but how He is with the feeblest effort on my part when I try from the sanctuary to speak to you of Him, which of us can tell? All we know is, that He does.

And now, my Sisters, prepare yourselves, each of you, for the trials and afflictions which are half a Sister's forming and teaching. Only be ready, when evils seem most unexpected, when paths seem most crooked, when men seem most perverse, when GOD seems most to have forgotten you; only be ready then, only try to realise then, only sharpen the hearing of faith then to catch that whisper which then certainly will be breathed, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And remember, it is He that does it. Does a Sister seem unkind? It is He Who allows it. Does a work seem hard? It is He Who appoints it. Am I myself mistaken and unsympathising?

Through *my* evil He is about to bring forth His good. Oh, dear Sisters, take it so, and worldly mistakes will melt into His everlasting wisdom, earthly unkindness into His unspeakable Love; the errors of friends into the infallibility of Him that sticketh closer than a brother. Think so, and go on, and act as if it were so, and some day, my Sisters, it shall be fully, plainly, gloriously accomplished, "What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter."

And now, &c.

SERMON XXII.[1]

First Sunday after Trinity.

THE GIFTS OF JUDAH.

"And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thy hand. And he gave it her."—Gen. xxxviii. 17, 18.

About this very story, S. Augustine says, Let us abhor the sin, but let us not quench the prophecy. See how the light of the Holy Ghost, falling on such dark and foul places as this history of Judah and Tamar, not only purifies and hallows them, but transfigures them into types of the highest love, of the greatest perfection, of the most unbroken faith.

You have Tamar forsaken, and sitting by the roadside, in a dress of sorrow. And I think you know that, so far as this world is concerned, it has nothing to be a real consolation; nothing that can bestow real love; that its promises are the broken reed, and what it sets

[1] 1860.

before you as aims, are merely the uncertain marsh-lights of an autumn night. And I am sure you know how utterly your own strength is weakness: what hundreds of resolutions you have made, and they have snapped like tow: how often you have said, "Now at last this shall be,"—and it *has* been as little as in previous times. You know what it is to look back to a certain number of months, and to say—to say it with all the bitterness of disappointment—"I doubt if I am not further from the Kingdom of Heaven now than I was then! I doubt if I am not more unlike Him Whom all the desire of my heart is to be more and more like!"

Well: be of good courage. Poor Tamar shall not be left utterly alone. One, coming along the road, is about to have compassion on her. By chance a certain Priest is coming down this way: and when He sees her, He will not pass by on the other side. What manner of man Judah was I nowhere read; but what manner of man This, his antitype is, your own hearts can tell. Does He not wear a Crown of Thorns on His Head? When the cold bitter winds of this world blow aside His garments a little, can you not see the print of nails in His Feet? When He stretches forth His Hand to you, is there not therein a red spot, a true Rose of Sharon, the source of all beauty and sweetness

and love? And if He should open to you His Heart, would you not find a cleft in that glorious Side, where the trembling dove may take refuge, —"a covert from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

And if you should further ask, This way, on which He travels, where does it lead from?—that I can answer. It leads from the glorious land which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the land where are the four and twenty elders, and the Four Living Creatures, and the hundred and forty and four thousand that are the spotless lilies of that country. It leads from the unceasing song of the angels—that song of which few faint snatches sometimes come down to earth, as in that old Christmas night, when the first *Gloria in Excelsis* was heard by the shepherds—as it does sometimes even now, when in some glorious Liturgy the *Ter Sanctus* seems almost visibly to unite us with that celestial hierarchy which we know to be invisibly worshipping in the same place. And whither does that road lead? It leads from all glory to all shame; from Mount Sion, the City of the Living GOD, to Mount Golgotha, the place of a skull; from those happy hymns to miserable blasphemies; from the countless thousands of worshipping spirits, to the numbers of

those that wag their heads and say, "Ah, Thou That destroyest the temple!" "Let the King of Israel come down!"

This then is the resemblance of the Passer-by; this His Way; where He comes from, and where He goes to. And now He stops by that poor broken-hearted Tamar,—and what does He say to her? Ah, that is a whisper of peace and love which is not—which could not be—written in the Old Testament; such a voice as the lips of One only ever could have uttered: a voice so full of joy that it seems hardly credible, and yet so impressed on that suffering heart, that, though others cannot hear it, *it* cannot doubt. I think those words which the King of Glory and Man of Sorrows bends over the poor sitter by the wayside to speak, are these: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." And having said this, what else is there of which He will not speak? By what title of love will He not now address her who, so few moments ago, was an outcast? Of those other words I have spoken to you in days gone by: "Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled. Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee." And when was love like this satisfied without promising something to the object beloved? What then will He promise Who so speaks; He Who on the one hand *is* love; on the other, Who hath

all power in Heaven and in earth? What, indeed! What, of the place and the name better than of sons and of daughters; what, of the white stone and the new name; what, of the hidden manna; what, of the pillar in the temple of GOD that shall go no more out? These things He promises to give: He promises, Whom she may safely trust; and yet she has something to ask yet. "Wilt Thou give me a pledge?" No want of faith this. Look how Abraham, the Father of the faithful, said the same thing: when promised the inheritance of the earthly Canaan, he immediately asks,—"Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" So afterwards, she, the model of all faith, could yet say, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" "Wilt Thou give me a pledge?"

And behold, dear Sisters, the choice is left to yourselves. "What pledge shall I give thee?" Of Him That has all things, what is fittest to ask? What will most closely bind you to Him? What will cause Him to have the dearest recollection of you? "What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand." O everlasting inheritance for all CHRIST's true servants: more peculiarly the heritage of His Brides! Pledge in this world of the many mansions in the next; earnest now, in the sor-

rows of time, of the tears wiped from all eyes in eternity. And first the signet. Let the Apostle tell us what that means. "From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS." What marks? Of a surety those marks which showed that the Apostle's hands were pierced with the same nails that had cleft the LORD's; crucified to every worldly deed, hallowed and strengthened and consecrated by that Sacrament of all strength and holiness for warfare, to the end of life, with Satan and his powers! I look, dear Sisters, on that LORD, on your Husband, on my Master; I see now by faith that signet mark on His Hand: and when, after my skin worms have destroyed my body, and in my flesh I shall see GOD, I shall behold with these very eyes that signet mark again: the nail scar that wrought the redemption of the world, the inscription which has recorded all His elect in the Hands of the Redeemer: as He says in the Prophet, "I have graven thee in the palms of My Hands." Then I look on your hands, my Sisters, and there I see on many, and shall some day, I hope, see on all, the signet transferred from the LORD's to yours; the golden ring of bridal fidelity: which marks you out to others as His, which reminds yourselves of Him. Surely a hand thus marked ought never to sin; surely the hand that bears the

characters of Calvary, only translated into a gentler language, ought, as it were, perpetually to feel the touch of the King of Calvary. "Thy signet." They tell how S. Eulalia, only twelve years old, when in the presence of a countless multitude of spectators in the vast plains of Merida, stripped of her garments and scourged almost to death, gloried in thus bearing the marks of Him That was scourged in the Prætorium. The early Christian poet, Prudentius, in his hymn for that Virgin Martyr, represents her as thus speaking:

> "I bear Thy mark upon me here;
> Thy written characters are dear.
> They stamp Thy glory on my shame,
> Each life-drop magnifies Thy Name!"

This is how they asked for, and wore, the signet of old; and you, my Sisters, must wear it as truly, though not as painfully. And this I say to you that have not yet asked for that pledge, Take care how you ask it; take care that your whole heart and soul and love are in the matter. Leave it, if you will, now: and an entrance may be administered—not abundantly, but may still be administered,—into the joy of your LORD. But put it on, and wear it unworthily: if you wish to know such remorse as you can scarcely learn in any other way; if you wish to grieve the Bridegroom's heart, as you can

grieve it in no other way. But having resolved, knowing in your hearts how you would answer that question, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" then, the earlier the better; then, the more years of youth that can be given to your LORD, so much the worthier offering; then, the longer period of that season in which earthly love could most delight, what is it but the more acceptable offering to Heavenly Love?

But it goes on: "And thy bracelets." Those bracelets He first put on in the same night wherein He was betrayed. He put them on in a garden, in the midst of soldiers and officers, and the one traitor, and the eleven fugitive Apostles. And He wore them till they were changed for those more enduring bracelets which held Him to the Cross, till He, Who looseth the prisoners, set Himself free with that most blessed saying, "FATHER, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit." The bracelets, dearest Sisters, that He gives you, are obedience. There is no more striking portion in the Western Office for the ordination of a Priest, than that in which the Archdeacon ties with a rope the hands of each of the candidates, in token that henceforth they take up the service of CHRIST. What they do, so must you. You must not be weary, you

must much less be vexed, at my so constantly repeating this thing. You know how difficult it is; you know how constantly you are tempted to fling these bracelets aside; how often you say —in your hearts, deep down, so deep that you will not allow it to yourself—"We will not have this Man to reign over us." I will tell you exactly what I have learnt on this subject, my Sisters. Long before this House had a being, I knew, and fully believed, and felt in myself the difficulty of that obedience which ascetic writers make the most necessary part of a Christian life. I cannot say that actually I see it harder now than I did then: but, comparatively with many other things, I do. I mean this. Had it been told me, four or five years ago, of the way in which, at different points of your Sister's life, you would have shown forth the grace of GOD by doing things which to the world seem impossible, and which involve a degree of self-denial not unworthy of Saints, I should then have said, Well, those at least, who have mastered such difficulties as these, will also have mastered, and that for ever, the difficulty of obedience. Ah! how different it is in reality! I see you all occasionally doing things in GOD's service that remind me of what was said of Joshua and his fellows, that they were "men wondered at;" and then I see some com-

paratively—as I should have thought—easy question of obedience come before you, and I find that the grace which could conquer the one is not sufficient for the other. I see the signet glittering brightly enough: but when I look for the poor bracelets, they are gone. Oh, if GOD would but touch my lips, so that I could persuade you, each and all, to say, In this matter of obedience, either, by GOD's grace, I will never fail again; or, if I do, then when I am seen to be giving way by others, I will think her my truest friend and my dearest Sister, who reminds me of what I now say, and of what I then ought to do.

I confess it requires some grace in you to hear me dwell so constantly on this subject without feeling annoyed or irritated. But bear with me, dear Sisters. I did not put the bracelets into the text, and I dare not leave them out. "If thou wilt be perfect!" does not that text echo again and again in your ears, when you hear of these things? Will you not ask yourselves this question—Do I ever mean to be perfectly obedient, or do I not? If I do not, how dare I daily break the most solemn vows a woman can make, dishonour Him Whom I profess to love, lead others to think less of the sin, discourage him whom I call my Priest? how can I wear this dress, exhibit this cross, look at this

ring? If I do, why not at once? Will habits of obedience get easier by being put off? Do I expect a miracle to be wrought to make them without difficulty? What is it I am waiting for?—and what if the time of my waiting should expire? What if the Bridegroom return from the wedding, and my bracelets lie scattered in fragments on the ground, instead of shining brightly round my wrist?—Surely, in that, as in all things, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

"And Thy staff that is in Thine Hand." And what that is, dear Sisters, I cannot have any need to explain at length. The staff wherewith our true Jacob passed over the River of Death, and became two bands: namely of men and angels; of men, for ever redeemed: of angels, for ever made secure. This is the staff with which our True David went out, and smote Goliath. This Cross, at times, you have all of you well and happily taken up. GOD knows a hundredfold more of what you have done than I do; but I know enough to fill me with unspeakable thankfulness. You have asked for it: you have, on the whole, carried it well: and it remains, that you carry it to the end. And see how remarkably it is spoken of here: "and *the* staff that is in Thy Hand" would have been surely enough. But no. "*Thy* staff which is in *Thy*

Hand:" twice over; as if to show how completely, first and last, this weapon is the LORD'S: how He devised it for Himself: how He bare it in the heat of the battle, how He recommended it to all His true servants: how from that time to this it has performed unnumbered miracles,—chased countless foes,—conveyed thousands of once timid, now happy pilgrims, over their last water-flood: how it will yet some day appear as the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; and then shall the end be.

Well; but remember this also. The signet, the bracelets, the staff, are gifts indeed,—but such gifts, as are pledges: asked for, for a certain time, and to a certain end. Tamar will not be left to sit by the wayside in the garments of her sorrow. The King's Virgin Brides are now, as of old time, in the midst of their purification: waiting till they are called to go in to Him,—raised from the outer court to the inner palace, from the care of the chamberlain to the love of the Prince, from the oil of myrrh and other preparatives of repentance to the left Arm under the head, and the right Arm embracing them. Thus they will go in to Him from the world one by one: but that will not be the end. When "*all* the Virgins 'shall again be' gathered together," so it is expressly written, then Mordecai, the True Mordecai, shall sit in the King's gate;

when their warfare is accomplished, their iniquity pardoned, *then* their Bridegroom will for ever assume His Kingdom. Then the Man of Sorrows will be the Prince of Peace: then their pledge will be returned into His own hands, and the beautiful robe of immortality, and the crown of light, and the place among the hundred and forty and four thousand, will be given in their place. Then will Tamar once more say, "Discern, I pray Thee, whose are these; the bracelets, and the signet, and the staff:" and that glorious Judah shall acknowledge them, and say, "To her that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My FATHER on His Throne."

And now, &c.

SERMON XXIII.[1]

First Sunday after Trinity.

TRUE JUDGMENT.

"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."—1 Cor. iv. 3.

I DOUBT not that you will at once imagine that I am about to apply this text to all priests with reference to their people, and so to myself with regard to you. Indeed no. It requires to be, not only a priest, but a Saint also, before one can take it in one's mouth. If one is able to say, as S. Paul to the same Corinthians, "Ye are in our hearts to die and live with you," and again, "Great is my boldness of speech to you, great is my glorying over you," it asks the grace of GOD in a superabundant degree to be able also to say, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you." True; I know that when a priest has committed his way to GOD, and believes that his prayers have been

[1] S. Barnabas' Eve, 1860.

heard by Him Who has promised to hear them, then nothing else ought to matter. But it *does* matter grievously. And at any time, to be hastily judged by any of you, so far from being a very small matter to me, is a very grievous trial. *Well*, however: if it makes one all the more long for that place and time where the multitude of them that believe shall be entirely and eternally of one heart and one soul; that "Jerusalem which is built as a city that is at unity in itself:" that place "whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD," by different ways indeed, but attaining the same goal.

No: I am not about to apply this text to any earthly priest, but to Him Who is the great High Priest, and Whom only it can fit perfectly. But first, I want you to notice a strange expression in it: "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." But that expression "man's judgment" is in the Greek, "man's day:" that is, the *day*, or light, which man is able to cast on any subject. And then see how beautifully this agrees with that verse in the Psalms, "In Thy Light shall we see light." "Man's day:" a very small thing to be judged by; that of real matter, the Light of Him Who is the true Light, not only the "Sun that rises with healing in His wings," but "the Lantern to our feet" in the

darkness of this world. "In Thy Light, O LORD JESUS!" exclaims S. Bernard. "But in which light? The star which, after a long and weary journey, came and stood over where the young Child was? Verily, yes: for then, like those whom that star led, we also shall come with our gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. The Light which shone around Thee in Thy Transfiguration, when Thy garments became exceeding more glistering than snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. Verily, yes: for then didst Thou show, when this body of our humiliation, having been for a while taken down, shall be again put together, what light we shall have, we shall walk in, we shall shine forth with, for ever and ever." So S. Bernard. But S. Fulbert of Chartres, he looks at it in a different way. "In Thy Light shall we see light. But how, O LORD, can these things be? So let me again ask Thee as doubting Nicodemus asked of old. Thou didst spend whole nights, dark, cold, tempestuous nights, on stormy mountains and headlands; and is it still written, that in Thy Light shall we see light? Thou didst manifest Thyself to Thine Apostles in the fourth watch of the night, when the time was at the very darkest, so dark that they took Thee, their own dear LORD, for a spirit, and cried out through fear; and again, in

the dark Easter night, when the disciples were met secretly for fear of the Jews; and again, when, beginning around Thy throne, the throne of the glorious Cross, and thence spreading over all the world, there was darkness over the earth from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. It is written, 'The LORD said that He would dwell in the thick darkness:' and is it now said, 'In Thy Light shall we see light?' Even so, O dear LORD and Captain of our Salvation! Even so, come to us when we are in the darkness of sorrow and temptation; and so rebuke not only the tempest, that there may be a great calm, but also the darkness, that there may be a light. And when I am going down into that utter and horrible darkness that all Thy servants must pass through, even because Thou Thyself didst pass through it, that darkness of death which will blot out the sweet light of this world, of which the wise man saith, 'Surely the light is good, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun;' then open mine eyes to that better and brighter light, such as shines on the everlasting mountains, such as is reflected in the perpetual flowers that spring up in the fields by the river of the water of life, such as glitters on the golden towers, and the wall that lieth foursquare, and the twelve pearl-gates of New Jerusalem. O LORD JESUS! when shall we wake up to that

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glory, and in Thy Light, O True Sun of Righteousness, behold that light?" Thus far S. Fulbert.

"With Me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you." Was it not so from the beginning—yes, and even with those whom He loved best? Did it not seem so even with her, the highest of created, the purest of fallen, beings: her that is more honourable than the Cherubim, and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim, as the Eastern Church says: the Virgin Mother of GOD? "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." And then behold how she, nowise discouraged at that apparently hard speech, judges not her Son at all, but only turns to the servants with those words of faith, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." And notice, how, to all ages, it is His Love which makes our great High Priest say, "With Me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you." See, in that evening in which He was betrayed, when, because He loved His own to the end, therefore He was about to give them the greatest gift that lay even in His Own royal treasures, He foresaw nevertheless how that very gift should be misjudged and despised and reviled; how they that adore Him in His very Body and Blood, should themselves be mocked and persecuted;

with what blasphemies this most excellent and precious gift should be set at nought, and He Himself as it were again crucified,—not once, but thousands and thousands of times,—not by Jews, but by them that call themselves Christians; how many a place, professedly dedicated to His honour, would echo with revilings and denunciation of His own words, "This is My Body." And it is as if He, foreseeing all this, said, "Let be. With Me it is a very small thing that I should be thus judged. With Me, in the greatness of My Love to those whom I have loved from the beginning, it is a very small thing that this Body, crucified on Mount Calvary, this Blood, poured forth for the cleansing of My people, should be held up to scorn and contempt and reproach: that again and again it should be said, 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' that the words which I, the God of Truth, spake in the hour of My agony, should have the lie given to them. Let be that evil men and seducers should set at nought this manna for the food, this precious remedy for the medicine of My people. Nevertheless, I, the King of Ages, shall go into miserable cottages, and be received by many a dying Lazarus; I, the Eternal High Priest, shall again be the Victim, and as I once offered Myself on the Altar of the Cross, so I shall offer Myself now at the Throne

of the FATHER. I shall be the Viaticum which shall carry many a loving soul safely through that its last conflict with death, and open to them the doors of everlasting life. With Me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by blasphemers and the ignorant, by the worldly-minded and unbelievers: this is My gift, O My faithful people, to you. This shall be the Daily Sacrifice of the New Covenant: this shall be the glorious Oblation of the Christian Altar. Daily I shall be received by those who have a place and a name better than of sons and daughters in My Courts, now: by those who, as they tread most closely in My footsteps on earth, so they shall hereafter have a portion among the hundred and forty and four thousand in My Heavenly Kingdom. By these means I will be as the dew to this true Israel: by this means, nourish those lilies which, too often sadly spotted in the storm of earth, shall grow up and be immaculate in the Gardens of Paradise."

Thus, dearest Sisters, the Saints tell us that the King of Saints would speak. As did He not so speak in another part of His Passion? "With Me it is a very small thing that I should be judged." Judged by Annas, Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Herod: judged by four unrighteous judges: judged on the part of the governor with,

"I find in Him no fault at all;" and on the part of the people with, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." We know how little the foreknowledge of this judgment hindered the Innocent LAMB from entering on His Passion: hindered Him! nay, how rather, foreseeing it all, He cried out, "I have a Baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

And then think, how often we still harshly judge Him, Whom we love best. Not in words, I know; not even, perhaps, in general thoughts: but we know, if we know ourselves, how hard it is not to take His dealings with us in a way exactly the opposite of that in which He intends us to receive them. Take, for example, such an affliction as that which has now fallen on this house;[1] and see how it is: I will speak for myself. Is not one's first thought that it is an interruption to GOD's service, rather than, as our LORD intends, a means of promoting it? Does not one naturally think: This must shorten our prayers, must make our hours somewhat irregular, must make our rules somewhat uncertain: (and all that is perfectly true;) and therefore it must be a hindrance, not a help, to the Religious Life of

[1] One of the inmates had been frightfully burnt: lingered long, and suffered great agony: very few Sisters were at home, and their strength was taxed to the uttermost.

the House? And yet how false that is! You think—whether rightly or wrongly—that I cannot enter into the difficulties and pain and sorrow of such a ministration to the sick. Well; be it so. The priest may not: but the great High Priest can and does;—knows what it costs you better than you know yourselves,—and intends this as a way, in which, if you will but be worthy of the gift, the windows of Heaven may be opened, and a larger blessing than usual poured down. It is as if the LORD said to you, His Brides: "Hitherto you have been out into the highways and hedges, ministering to Me in My poor; now I come among you: now, in one of My servants, I give Myself to be tended by you, as the women that followed Me would have ministered to Me, had it been allowed them, in My Passion. Remember only that it is Me Whom you are tending: and so remembering, the time will come when I shall minister to you: when My left arm shall be under the bed of death, and My right arm shall be raising you up to everlasting life."

I went over a House of Sisters of Charity the other day, in Piedmont, where they had one room set apart for dangerous surgical cases, so many happening from the tunnel, twenty miles long, which they are making through the bowels of Mont Cenis. And a more fearful set of acci-

dents (there were eight or nine) I could not have even imagined. Poor creatures, almost crushed out of the semblance of humanity, and yet living; —aye, living, and with the hope—ah me! *what* a hope it was!—of recovering. Over the door was written, "JESUS CHRIST again enters on His Passion in this room." I asked the Sister who was my guide, where that quotation was taken from. "Do you not know?" she asked. "From the last letter which our happy Father" she meant of course S. Francis de Sales—"wrote to our Sisters at Annecy. If we believe that, we can do anything. These cases are nothing to what we have had. In some of them, if I had not seemed to see JESUS CHRIST Himself, *mon Dieu! cela m'eût été tout-à-fait impossible.*" I little thought then that you, my Sisters, would have a case of the same kind, so soon; and I am sure that the only help or comfort which was theirs then, can be yours now: and further, that that comfort always has been, always will be, the only one comfort in such trouble.

But then, my Sisters, with what truth might you, intending to follow that glorious LORD, so follow Him by taking these His words—for His words they are—upon your own lips! Should you not say to a world that cannot abide His service, that laughs to scorn the idea of obedience, that mocks at a life of chastity, that

abhors poverty, should you not say, each of you, "To me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment?" Surely He scorneth the scorner, and though scorn is not the feeling for one fallen creature to cherish as regards another, yet for the belief of that other one may and must have it. Still one also feels this, that these outward opinions, these external attacks, scorn and hatred and opposition from others, never can do any harm, even though they be as fierce and rough as possible. O my Sisters, nothing can hurt you but yourselves. And if any one of you says, "Ah, but that is a fearful power! let one of us prove false to her vows and promises, and theory of life, and we are all hurt, perhaps mortally:" I answer, No. A Sister forgetful of her duties is indeed a most grievous sight, a sight for angels to weep over: a thought too grievous to dwell upon;—for herself. But for others? Well; Job said in the lesson for yesterday, "the fishes of the sea shall instruct thee:" and so they shall. When any sharp harmful thing makes its way within the shell of the oyster, such a harmful annoyance as, not fenced off, must destroy the fish, what does that fish do? It forms round the intruding substance a bulwark of defence; and that defence is a pearl. So with regard to an erring Sister. You may allow yourselves to be irritated, worried, tempted to sin,

injured in temper (how often in Sisterhoods that has been seen!) or you may by additional gentleness, self-command, self-restraint, watchfulness, tenderness, kindness, form your own defence; and that defence shall be a spiritual pearl.

Be sure of this, that whatever GOD not only sends, but allows, He sends or allows as a means whereby you should be able to increase the brightness of your reward. The grievous affliction that has befallen this house—it may be the means of simply annoying you, leading you to break rules, putting an end to order and the like—but it may be really, as it is intended to be, the groundwork of some future pearl for your crown. For what has been already done in this matter, I thank,—no, not any of you, but—your LORD: and Him I do thank, with all my heart; and I may believe that more than one pearl is forming out of the sorrow. But they are better won than talked about. If it be so, you will only wish to have them, that, having them, you may offer them to the King Who was Himself once the Man of Sorrows.

Yet try for them, dearest Sisters. I trust some day that you may have those crowns to cast down before the Throne of which Trinity week told us: the ornaments of them will be such seasons of affliction well borne as you are now

called to endure. Believe me, that I do very earnestly pray that this may be so: no night of these that I know one of you to be watching that, when I wake, I do not fervently and in a set manner, commend that one to GOD. And may our dear LORD reward what is done, and fill you with the light and love for what is to do, for His own sake!

And now, &c.

SERMON XXIV.[1]

A SISTER'S CONTRASTS.

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."—2 Cor. vi. 10.

THE second Epistle to the Corinthians is the Epistle of Christian consolation. How well we can understand why it should be so! S. Paul had spoken in his first Epistle more harshly to them than to any of the other Churches to whom he writes. And now his love seems unable to be restrained; he is anxious to make up for that hastiness, necessary though it were; and no words of tenderness, or comfort, or affection seem able to express his full meaning. I often think of those two Epistles, dearest Sisters, when I have had to blame any of you for any fault. You can scarcely guess the yearning desire that follows to make it up to you in some way: to be able to give you the more comfort,

[1] 1858.

the more help, the more love; and, if it can be done by no other means, at least that dear Sister who has been blamed has an extra share, (and you each of you have always a large share,) in my prayers.

One can imagine the joyful news, specially through Corinth, that S. Luke and Titus had brought another letter from the great Apostle: how forthwith the Deacons were despatched to summon the poor and the rich,—the poor from the back lanes and courts of that which was the Deptford and the Greenwich of Greece, the rich from their lordly marble houses, (Corinth was the most luxurious city in the world,) looking down on the two seas, both ways across the isthmus; how they met and eagerly listened for the consolation after the rebuke, the love after the seeming harshness.

That whole sixth chapter is indeed, as I have told you before now, a Sister's chapter. I wish you would all learn it by heart; at all events I trust and pray that it may be written deeply *in* your hearts. And the verse you heard just now is the sum and substance of it. "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

"As sorrowful!" Ah! my Sisters, we have enough to make us sorrowful! Living in such a day of trouble and rebuke and blasphemy: so

hated and despised ourselves, seeing our dear LORD's dearest and best gifts so profaned, so mocked, so disbelieved! That outwardly: and then inwardly, that we, who are in some sort counted worthy to suffer for His sake, are so little worthy of Him and of His cause! That is what ought to humble us: that we seem to be, and in a certain sense are, bearing His reproach, while we know in ourselves how little we merit that truest and highest of all honours!

"As sorrowful!" Yes, a Sister's life must be *as* sorrowful: mark you, it does not say, "sorrowful." She must constantly be striving at a perfection which she can never fully attain in this world; it is her very vocation to see so much of sin, so much of suffering, to experience so much disappointment, to see so many hopes nipped. And as that Mère Agnès, of whom I was telling you the other day, wrote to one of her novices: "Indeed, my child, if you felt otherwise than depressed, I should see in you very little sign of vocation for the Religious Life. I look round, it is all dark, our dear Father[1] not only silenced but imprisoned; our confessions made to those who are rather spies than true Fathers. I look inward, and there from my own heart I can judge of what my Sisters have to contend with:—not all in the same degree

[1] M. de S. Cyran.

I hope,—but have to contend with, still! The fruit of the Spirit is joy; our Blessed LORD said it, and we know it: but it is joy which can consist with such sorrow, nay, it is a joy which cannot exist without some such kind of grief." And so she goes on, comforted and comforting by the hope of that reaping in joy after sowing in tears which she, and no doubt the Sister to whom she wrote, have long since entered into.

Notice the difference between the two clauses. "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing." The rejoicing, *alway;* the sorrow, not alway; the joy, pure and absolute, "rejoicing;" the grief, only in a particular sense, and in a particular form of speech: "*as* sorrowful." Dear Sisters, you would be here to very little purpose, your crosses would be a mere useless ornament, your dresses would be a mockery, unless you knew and felt at once what is the ground and source of this *alway* joy. It is because the one aim of your life is always to be—if it may be so, *sensibly*—with Him Whom you love. If you could but realize this: that you might, actually and really, be with Him more closely than you can be with any earthly being, you know it would be joy past joy. You know *what* joy that is which sometimes, with a great effort, kneeling in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, you have experienced. That, rare and passing as it is, *might* be the

abiding and habitual feeling of your mind. Look each of you to the time when you have felt most comfort and happiness and nearness to GOD here, and then judge, if that same feeling could be yours always, would it not be indeed "always rejoicing?" Oh dear Sisters, how cruelly they misjudge us, how little they know of our real heart's desires, who would make our faith a faith of forms, a faith of leaning on, or trusting to anything else than that one most dear and most precious Name! All we want to do is to be close to Him. I think we should all answer with the Church's greatest Doctor, "Thou hast written well concerning Me, Thomas, what wilt thou have therefore?" "LORD, I desire nothing except Thyself." Think of the unspeakable nearness there is between the Priest and his child in the moment of Confession, and then remember that it is *distance* compared to what might be your nearness to the Great High Priest every moment of your lives. "Yet alway rejoicing," indeed!

"As poor, yet making many rich." Poor, truly, you are, dearest Sisters; I do not mean so much in that external poverty which they must know who minister to the poor; but poor by your own act and deed, in giving up the greatest earthly treasure that can belong to a human creature—earthly love. You know how many and how

glorious promises are made to that sacrifice: more and more glorious than to any other. How it is the lilies among whom the Lamb feeds: how it is the hundred and forty-four thousand that follow Him whithersoever He goeth, how the New Song hereafter is for Virgin souls and for those only. A blessed poverty, then, my Sisters: a poverty which will set a special crown on the brow of each one of you; if only you walk worthy of such a vocation; if only your lamps are burning when the Bridegroom shall come. And for other poverty,—if it should ever please GOD that you should be tried with that, I know that you will try to meet it as those who seek another country, that is, an Heavenly: who are followers of a King indeed, but yet of a poor King: as those who believe His words, "Blessed are ye poor."

But by all these ways, what follows? "Yet making many rich." Not certainly in a worldly sense,—that you will never do; but enriching them with that heavenly wealth, of which Job says, "The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall the exchange of it be for jewels of pure gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price of wisdom is above rubies." Did the wonderful beauty of that last clause ever strike you? Listen to it again, "No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for the price

of wisdom is above rubies." And see what a whole mine of theology is contained in it.

First of all, *coral*. Now coral, as we know, is the work of a very small, weak, defenceless insect, which yet, in the course of time, builds up great reefs and islands in the midst of the stormy sea. Many of those groups of islands in the Pacific Ocean, now teeming with life, and waving with their palms and bananas and plantains, are only and simply the work of this poor little insect. Coral then is the type of the ordinary Christian life; each Christian weak enough in himself, each labouring in the midst of the troublesome sea of this world, but yet all together bringing forth those mighty actions, performing those great deeds which make the history of the Church. Next, *pearls*. And how are pearls made? By dropping into the oyster-shell some sharp substance, which torments the poor fish day and night; and from which he can only free himself by enclosing it with this beautiful covering, gradually formed from his own body. The pearl, then, sets forth to us the Confessor, called to some especial suffering for CHRIST's sake, and out of that especial suffering winning to himself especial glory. And lastly, the *ruby*, by its very colour, tells us of Martyrdom. Thus Job would teach us that neither the coral,—the ordinary sufferings of a Christian

life, nor the pearl,—the sharper miseries of the Confessor, no, nor yet the ruby of Martyrdom, can equal in value the attainment of that true and eternal Wisdom; they are all well borne, ten thousand times well borne, if by their means we may but obtain the fruition of Him.

"As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Nothing indeed in ourselves; every day's experience teaches us so; nothing but sin, and weakness, and misery. Not one day but we learn something more about that. I am sure not one Confession we ever make, I speak for myself as much as for you, but we have a fresh revelation, as it were, of how miserably unstable we are. And therein is our strength and our safety, that we should thoroughly know this: because then comes in the glorious emphasis of the last clause: "And yet possessing all things." How do we not possess Him? A few, few words, one simple action, and the mighty God comes among us in this Oratory: comes among us, not as apart from us, not as enveloped in Majesty, and unapproachable; but to be ours, to be our all. We are sick, He comes to be our medicine; we are weak, He comes to be our food; we are defenceless, He comes to be our armour; we are wounded, He comes to be our healing; we are impure, He comes to be our holiness; we are dead, He comes to be our

life. Oh, what a Nothing on the one hand! oh, what an All things on the other!

And all these things are a Sister's contrasts. The longer I am with you, the more I have to do with you, the more of these things I learn in you, as well as in myself. It is the science of sciences; these contradictions, our weakness and our strength, our defilement and our holiness, our inability to do anything and our power to do all things. Nothing so dangerous as to look too much at each by itself: it is despair or presumption. Take them together, and they are that blessed hope by which, as S. Paul tells us, we are saved.

This is my earnest prayer for you all, dearest Sisters, that you may so say with our Blessed LORD, "I can of mine own self do nothing," as also to say with S. Paul, "I can do all things." All things that your Blessed LORD would have you do; all things that the Saints ever did; all things, in the suffering and endurance of this wilderness; all things, in the glory and the joy of that Canaan!

And now, &c.

SERMON XXV.[1]

After Trinity.

NO TURNING BACK.

"There is no discharge in that war."—Eccles. viii. 8.

Of all the Saints who ever seemed most fully to realise the peace which passeth all understanding in this world, and to have the deepest insight into those good things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, in the next, S. Bernard is he that, perhaps, holds the first place: and well, on that account, deserves his title of the "Honey-mouthed." But they tell of a disciple of his, a priest who was in charge of some convent, who was thought to rival his master in his descriptions of Heaven, and of the blessedness of God's service, and of the perfection of His peace; and whose sermons were the more relished by the Sisters of that House, then already beginning to relax from their first love, because he never dwelt on the means to that happy end; because, while always speaking of the Crown of Righ-

[1] August, 1857.

teousness, he forgot to dwell on the good fight; while setting forth the blessed conclusion of the race, he said nothing about the difficulties of the course itself. In process of time, he was taken from this world: and (says the legend) he appeared no long space after to one of the Sisters, and warned her to beware how she followed his example: for that, because he had never preached of anything but the joys of Paradise, he had been condemned to the place of torment.

My dear Sisters, I do not think that you could say of me, that I have not from the very beginning told you what a hard struggle you are engaged in; warned you, at first, not lightly or rashly to enter into it: and warned you, over and over again since, that, like Jephthah, you have opened your lips to the LORD, and you cannot go back. And I could scarcely take any text which would set this forth more strikingly to you, than that saying of Solomon's, which you have just heard: "There is no discharge in that war:" and the more closely we look at it, the more thoroughly it seems to apply. The preacher is speaking, as you know, about the certainty of death; and he says, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." He means, that in these bodies of ours, there is a perpetual contest going

on between life and death; and that, little by little, death is wearing them out; that, little by little, life is weakened and driven back; that this system of wearing out, never ceases during any one moment of the day or night: that every one pulsation of the heart tends to wear *it* out: every one exertion of the brain tends to wear *it* out: every step we take, every exertion we make, wears out the muscular power: that all this will go on till, as the same preacher says, "the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern: and then the body shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to GOD Who gave it."

In like manner, dearest Sisters, every one action of our Christian life ought to have a tendency to do that which it was prayed for us at the font that we might do: "crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." Every action of every Christian life: how much more of yours! For see, in the first place, another sense in which the text applies to you.

"There is no discharge in that war." You know that, for you, there is no discharge in this life which you have undertaken. You know that, even if any one of you has not fully and irrevocably bound herself to the Religious Life, still, were she to go back into the world, were

she to give up her higher aims, were she to seek opportunity, as S. Paul says, to return to that country whence she came out, it would be such a turning back from the plough, it would be such a slighting of GOD's grace, it would be such a flat contradiction of our dear LORD's own saying, "No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better:" that she never could have, never expect, the same sense of GOD's love in this world; must never look for the same crown in the next. No, dearest Sisters; it is my joy and comfort for you, that this your service can only cease with your life: that you have made your petition to the King that He would set you as a seal upon His heart, as a seal upon His arm; that you could say, in the full sense of the words, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the House of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the LORD, and to visit His temple:" that you might use, in its deepest sense, S. Paul's saying: "Whose I am, and Whom I serve." I believe that, though you may be tempted—as what Sister from the beginning of the Church has not sometimes been tempted?—to look back to the time when you had not so pledged yourselves: to indulge in thoughts of what might have been, if you had

not thus cast in your whole lot with CHRIST; still that, if it were to do again, by the grace of the HOLY GHOST, you would do it again, and choose the rougher path here, so that it might lead to the dearer companionship there.

Well, then; "there is no discharge in that war" in the other sense: that every moment of every day ought to see you carrying it on: that it is not as if some hours were set apart for it, and the rest you might fold your hands and sit idle: that it is not as if, for a certain portion of the day, you were to run on in the race; and for the other part, might be content if you did not go back. No: every minute of every hour is to be helping on in the work of your sanctification; either directly and immediately, in your own hearts: or indirectly, by your working for others. You are not likely to forget this in the Oratory, for example: you are not so likely to forget it, when positively engaged in some work of love for your LORD's sake: it is in your more unguarded moments, your recreation time, your meal time, your walks, your conversations, that your danger lies. Yet then also, "there is no discharge in that war." And, as the Saints have always taught us, even the hours of sleep are sanctified, if our waking hours have been; and therefore they have always dwelt so much on the necessity that the very first and last act—literally

the first and last of the day—should be an act of prayer.

I remember, dearest Sisters, the day when I was ordained Priest, feeling—certainly not in the words, but in the sense of the text—the irrevocable character of the warfare in which I was then engaged, with a sense of its blessing and happiness that was almost overpowering: that, whereas, before, I was free to choose whether I would be devoted to GOD'S especial service or not, now I had no power to turn back; now I was like those generals who have landed on an enemy's land, and then burnt their ships; now, what was before free choice, had become necessity. Since that, I have had the same feeling for you: and I know nothing that I have prayed for more earnestly than for your perseverance to the end. Dear Sisters, how little we can tell, in the course of events, what GOD may call on us to do or to suffer for His Name's sake; that Name, through the glorious Festival of whose remembrance we are now passing. No one ever seemed more entirely dependent on His guidance, more necessitated, whether they would or not, to follow the pillar of cloud and fire, than ourselves.

"There is no discharge in that war." Externally, we see it at every hour of the day. At this very time of this very day last year, we were engaged as now: we were about to offer up

the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: you were about to be strengthened with the Corn of the Mighty, and the Wine that blossoms into Virgins. Having obtained help of God, we continue to this day: never once remitting our Hours, never once failing, outwardly to carry on God's service. How long He may please to spare us strength and health and power, is in His own hands, and we are not to be anxious to inquire. The only thing is, to be found continually watching in this our warfare: let the alarm come when it may, to be found with our armour girt on us: let the Bridegroom return when He will, to have our lamps trimmed and bright. A thing, oh how little to be done in our own strength! asking oh how much of that grace of God which turns mountains into plains, which blots the word "impossible" out of a Christian's language, which makes the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.

When I was in France last time, I was descending into a very lovely valley, by a mountain path which wound down one of its sides, gradually sinking from the head of the ravine, into its lowest abyss. Above this path, and to my left, all was barrenness itself: rocks glowing and baking in the fierce sun: stunted brown grass, sere and slippery,—nothing but the low thistles

that delight in the fiercest heats: not one green blade, not one bush, not one leaf. But below the path, and to my right, everything was in the fullest verdure: here and there, great forest trees; here and there, fields of maize and wheat; here and there, vineyards and oliveyards, mulberries and figs: everywhere the corn and the grass, like that which Pharaoh saw in his dream, rank and good. And why was this? The whole hillside lay equally exposed to the sun and to the breeze; the rain fell on the higher as well as on the lower ground. Yes; but winding along the edge of the path, sometimes almost hidden in the tall grass and ferns, sometimes peeping out for a moment, was a tiny canal for the irrigation of the lower ground. A thousand puny streams branched off from it; and whereever they came, the wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them; and the desert rejoiced, and blossomed as the rose. I thought of you all, dearest Sisters, at the time: I thought how meet an emblem was the barren and dry hill on the one side, and the land like the garden of Eden on the other, of the heart left to itself, and the heart watered by the grace of the HOLY GHOST. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the rock where I then stood, and looked down on the rich valley beneath me, and thought of each of you, as I then knew her to be engaged,

and prayed that in each of you that type might be fulfilled, and that I might have the comfort and privilege of seeing it. Those little irrigating streams are turned on every morning, and flow for an hour or two only. And so, your great source of grace is supplied to you—is it not?—morning by morning. If there is no discharge in your warfare, there is no cease nor pause in the assistance GOD gives you in it. If you have sleepless enemies, "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." If you have a heavy burden to bear, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." If you have sometimes a dark road, GOD'S WORD, the Word made flesh, is a lantern to your feet and a light to your path. If "one day telleth another, and one night certifieth another" of doubt, difficulty, danger, temptation, how much more of GOD'S exceeding and abounding goodness!

Yes: it is because the warfare is ceaseless, that the armour is ceaseless too. Come now, dearest Sisters, as you have so often come before, to this Feast of all might. "They that wait upon the LORD"—and in what sense can you wait upon Him as now?—"shall renew their strength." Remember the old hymn:

> "And think that each new day will yield
> New struggle in new battlefield;"

and then recollect, that each day, since the first

institution of that Blessed Sacrament in the large upper room till now, some glorious battles have been fought and won by virtue of that Daily Sacrifice: that it has been found sufficient to the sorest needs of the greatest servants of our LORD. That which it did for them, it can do for you: that which it bestowed on them, it can bestow on you. In this only try to alter; try that every succeeding week shall find you more and more fitly prepared to receive the great gift of GOD: shall see you more and more acting up to what you know a Sister's life ought to be: more steadily and undeviatingly followers of JESUS CHRIST, "and Him crucified."

"There is no discharge" in that warfare. Dearest Sisters, some day there will be. Some day, the Blessed Captain of your salvation Himself will say, "It is enough:" will tell you that you may lay aside your armour, will whisper that your warfare is accomplished, your iniquity pardoned. And oh! what a discharge that will be! As that good man, S. Peter Damiani, than whom few ever fought a better fight, says:

> "Grant me vigour, while I labour,
> In the ceaseless battle pressed;
> That Thou mayst, the conflict over,
> Give me everlasting rest;
> And that I at length inherit
> Thee my portion ever blest."

Discharged, from the camp and its turmoil, to

the palace and its songs: from the assaults of the enemy, to the presence of the King: from the darkness of this world's night, to the light of the everlasting day. "These be they that have put off the mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and have confessed the SON of GOD: now are they crowned and receive palms!"

And now, &c.

SERMON XXVI.[1]

After Trinity.

THE GARDEN OF THE LORD.

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden."—S. John xix. 41.

You might search far and wide before lighting on a text that has such a depth of mystical beauty as this: which tells so many truths and points in so many directions. And first look back to that garden, the Paradise of pleasure; the place where the Lord God had planted every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food; whence a river went out, and was parted into four heads. Was not that most truly the place where our Lord was crucified? Surely: for just as when Adam had eaten the forbidden fruit, the sentence, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," though not carried visibly into effect for many centuries after, was really fulfilled: so our Lord's Cru-

[1] 1860.

cifixion, though not accomplished to the eye till four thousand years after, was yet from that moment actually present with Him, as His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. I wonder that Father Thomas, in that marvellous book of his on the Sufferings of JESUS, did not mention this as one—His clear prevision, during all that time, of His Passion in all its length, in all its clearness, in all its bitterness. And remember that, to GOD, that which we should think so long a period as four thousand years is nothing: "one day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Must it not have introduced some sorrow, some trouble, some imperfection into the beatitude of the Only-Begotten SON? I know we must not press this too far, lest we should make Deity passible: but neither ought we altogether to lose sight of it. "In the place where He was crucified there was a garden:" and not less wonderfully does it proceed: "and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein yet was never man laid." We read afterwards, during the journeys of the children of Israel, of the place called Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of lust. And was not that a new sepulchre in Eden, that grave of lust and disobedience in which, before Eve's fall, no man had ever yet lain? truly new, entirely new, but which afterwards

was to engulf every man that came into the world, the Second Adam only excepted?

That, then, for one meaning: but not the most beautiful nor the most appropriate. "In the place where He was crucified there was a garden." So there is still; so there will be ever. What is that garden, but the garden of graces, watered indeed by the continual dew of the HOLY GHOST, but yet deriving all its existence from the Cross that stands in it and hallows it? For see. Does not the rose of perfect love derive its being from the Rose of Sharon? is it not dyed with that most precious Blood which flowed from the Hands and the Feet and the Pierced Side? Does not the lily of purity draw its life from the snow-white Purity of Him that did no sin, neither was guile found in His Mouth—of Him Who was arrayed in a white robe to this very end, that He might be sent before Herod and his men of war to be mocked and set at nought? Does not the violet of penitence symbolize in its colour those health-giving and salutary Wounds of which the Wise Man had written long before: "The blueness of a wound driveth away evil?" Yes: every grace that heart of Martyr ever harboured, every grace that ever made beautiful the life of a Confessor, ever protected along her pilgrimage the Virgin Bride of CHRIST, every such grace has not only

its pattern in the Passion, but its source there also. The seven words uttered from the Cross are, as it were, the seven-hued Rainbow that spanned the storm on that day of trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy: and spanned it too with a promise of peace in the end. Still it was, "I do set My Bow in the Cloud."

Well: and what more? Is it not true that, as in all the sufferings of His members the Head suffers, so in all their crucifixion of their wills, their lusts, their old evil nature, He may also be said to be crucified? As He Himself said on that memorable night, when He met S. Peter leaving the city gates, "I go to be crucified in Rome again." Therefore, in this sense, every heart of His faithful people is a place where He is crucified; because it is the place where they are. And then it must follow: "Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden." For they must have a garden of grace, who go on persevering in this crucifixion of themselves: who turn as deaf an ear to the persuasions of the world as ever their Master did to the false invitation of the Jews: "Let the King of Israel now come down from the Cross, that we may see and believe." And how true is that metaphor of a garden! For think to how many accidents a garden is subject: to blight, to drought, to being trodden down by the incursion

of animals, to being destroyed by tempests; to the worm at the root, and the caterpillar devouring the leaves. And do not all these, save one, represent the dangers, my Sisters, of your own little gardens? And what is that one? Why, God be thanked, whatever may injure them, it can only be by your own fault if it be drought. In an earthly garden, without any crime of the poor withering leaves, without any fault of the gardener, the heaven above may be brass, and the earth beneath may be iron. But not so in the spiritual garden. There God never says, "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it," except where He has first pronounced His sentence, "Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" But in other matters, dear Sisters, there is deep deep cause for you all to look well, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many might be defiled. What is the caterpillar that feeds on the leaves, and destroys the beauty, if it cannot endanger the life of the plant? What, but constant inattention to, daily carelessness about, little actions, trifling words, matters of common life?

And what is the worm at the root? Ah! that is far sadder! Do you think it matters one straw whether it be a little worm, or a great worm, which is gnawing at the vital fibres of

the plant? And so, do you imagine that it matters one straw whether it be a little mortal sin, or a great mortal sin, which you will not destroy?—a sin which the world would cry out against, if it knew you to be in the habit of it: or which would hardly be called a sin at all by those who take the careless, outside, superficial view? It does not, indeed. If you once own to yourselves, "While I yield to this temptation, I know that I am going against my conscience:" what does the kind of temptation matter? You allow your vital powers to be sucked, sapped, drained away; what must be the result? It is marvellous how these things affect the Christian life. A stranger, a friend, can only say, "I am sure So-and-so is in the habit of no great sin; what can so check his or her progress?" And the Priest could reply—the Priest who knows—"Because in a trifling matter like this, or like that, he or she allows Satan to triumph, says it must be so, one cannot help it, one has tried and failed, one is weary of trying, the matter is hopeless." Now, dearest Sisters, remember this. "In the place where *He* was crucified there was a garden." You cannot call *that* a garden where the flowers are withered, where the leaves are sapless, where nothing flourishes, where plant after plant decays? If that be the case with the garden of your hearts, then, say what

you will, and think what you please, you have nothing to do with the Crucifixion. His Death leads to Life. In that He had no form nor comeliness, He did but lead us to loveliness and to beauty. In that, when the world saw Him, there was no beauty that they should desire Him, that only wrought in others the fulfilment of the promise: Thou wast "perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the LORD GOD." It must be so, indeed. This is no open question: no discussion where a great deal may be said on both sides. You, as Sisters, must have these graces, if you are true: or must be most miserably deceiving yourselves if you have them not. How can I speak—what can I say—which shall make you strain every nerve in this matter? This is the only way you can judge: the Cross and the Garden—both, or neither; where the Cross, there the Garden: where the Garden, there the True Cross. Ah! you little know how anxiously I watch, to judge of the one that I cannot see, by the one I can see! to be sure that the Crucified has been where I see the Passion Flowers!

But will it always be so? Will the garden necessarily imply the presence of the Cross? Well; in one sense it will: because to all eternity the Cross will continue in the everlasting Paradise of the Blessed: whether, as some think, in

its own actual substance; whether, as others, only in its sign and symbol. For remember, my Sisters, the flowers of grace are eternal. The flowers here nurtured, I hope, in S. Margaret's, will one day bloom by the side of Margaret's own. Some day, if GOD of His infinite mercies ever receives us, I shall see you and her together: both still tending those graces which both began here to tend. Only no possibility of blight then, no necessity of watchfulness then; a sky that knows no cloud, a sun that never scorches; the river of water of life to refresh and to feed. These things are so; you know it. O that every moment you would act as if you realised it! For me, I can truly say, my greatest joy is when you do so walk as if you were realising it, and my greatest sorrow when you so walk as if you were careless about it.

One day, my Sisters, what *if* it *might* be—(nay, let us be of more faith!—what *when* it *shall* be)—that these dear gardens shall be near, not the Cross, but the Throne—and that Throne perpetual, and the Garden unfading?

And now, &c.

SERMON XXVII.[1]

After Trinity.

SIT DOWN QUICKLY.

"So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore."—S. Luke xvi. 5—7.

If there never was a parable, delivered by Him Who spake as never man spake, so difficult to be understood as this, there is certainly none which in so many different ways applies to various scenes and dangers of the Christian life. I am not now about to go into the various interpretations that holy men have attached to this story: but to speak of one peril to God's service, especially in the religious life, of which it so clearly teaches.

"How much owest thou unto my Lord?" The greater part of you would answer, "I

[1] 1862.

owe Him, having once put my hand to the plough, never to look back, even when I shall have the opportunity of so doing without mortal sin; I owe Him the resolution, that the heart, once pledged, though it be for a certain time, to His Love, shall never sink down to receive earthly love as its tenant; I owe Him the full service of all my powers, the entire purity of all my thoughts; I owe Him to take up my voluntary cross daily, and to follow Him, the Lover of Poverty, the Lover of Chastity." But some of you, even now, can, as I hope almost all of you will hereafter be able to, say, "I owe Him more than this. I have resigned my own will to His for ever; I have renounced all love but His for ever; on my finger is the ring that points me out as His bride, on my head the veil that marks me as His servant: on my breast the cross that signs me as His soldier. Like that warrior of old, 'I have made a vow unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.' 'How much owest thou unto my LORD?' I owe Him all the love that His Saints in this same life have ever borne Him; all the obedience they have ever paid Him; all the penitence that they have felt; all the self-denial they have practised. That is what I owe: and most miserable I, if I owe what I cannot pay."

Ask the question of yourselves as often as you will; and too often you cannot ask it. But who

else is there whose business it is to remind you of it—and that not once or twice—but again and again to ask you, and to help you to give the true answer? Where is the steward who, unless he does his best to discover the truth, will certainly be accused to his Master that he has wasted His goods? Is it not your Priest, at all times, but more especially when you are alone with him and with your Guardian Angel, to tell of those debts which other mortal's ears will never be told of?

See then: the wickedness of this man to his master, gave him a kind of false popularity with that master's tenants. Do we not know how this is the case still? Do we not know that this is the reason why the world hates Confession so bitterly? Is it not because, in sermons, and in what is called mere pastoral conversation, it is so easy to say smooth things: whereas Confession, even if it be none of the strictest, must to some extent display the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores of men's hearts? See: there is a difference in the cases of the parable. In the one case, the debtor was told to pay eighty out of a hundred; in the other only fifty. Liken the former to a carelessly heard confession: the latter will be the state of that conscience where there is no confession at all.

A carelessly heard, and a carelessly made confession! Should we not say, did we not by sad

experience know the contrary, that the thing was impossible? S. Teresa, and her Confessor S. Juan d'Avila, were once talking on the subject. "If a priest understood the awfulness of his own power of Absolution," said S. Juan, "he would die of awe." "Possibly he might," replied S. Teresa; "but I am sure that, if the penitent did, he would die of love." So spoke those Saints: and we, how do we feel in the administration and reception of that blessed Sacrament?

Only imagine this: that now, for the first time, this wonderful power were given to men. Suppose that now, for the first time you were told: "Examine yourselves as strictly as you can, repent as earnestly as you can, then go to your Priest, and tell him all." Ah me! what a preparation would that be in each of you! There would be no complaints then of negligence in the inquiry, or carelessness in putting down the results. And with what joy and love would the final pardon be received!

But now, something else. If this settling the account between God and the soul is always so hard, so delicate, so dangerous a matter, how much more, how infinitely much more, in the case of those who have undertaken the Religious Life! Do you know, my Sisters, that if I were to allow myself, for long together, to dwell on the thought that I have

more than twenty of you, for whom one day I shall have to answer, I must give up my work among you? When any of you seem to make no progress,—when any of you seem falling back,—the fault, I know, is yours; but it may not be, and probably is not, yours alone. And this thing let our parable teach you: if ever a priest seems to you too particular, too harsh, to give you too hard a penance, is not that at least a better fault than the treating sin too lightly? than the slurring over what ought to be gone into in detail? than the giving a penance which is only a form, for a sin which is not a trifle? You know it is: you realise it from the bottom of your hearts. If, at any future time, it should so be that you are told, my Sisters, that you owe more than you think: what then? Is it not more probable that you are mistaken for yourselves, than he against you? And, if you are right: oh how many sins have you committed which you never can remember in this world; and how slight a balance is this against them!

But let us come to a word which is as important as any in the story. When the unjust steward wanted the debtors to fall short in the amount of their payments, what did he tell them to do? "Take thy bill, and sit down *quickly*, and write." And when Satan would hinder you from making a careful confession, it is: "Sit down

quickly and write. Get it over as quickly as you can. See how much else you have to do. Besides, you need not put anything down to-day, you will have plenty of time before your confession." S. Francis de Sales was by no means a strict Confessor: hear how he speaks to a child of his order of the Visitation. "The time was when She, the Virgin of virgins, stood at the foot of the Cross: there watching by Him, her Son, your Husband. Is not she to be your model? Have you entered the Religious Life without the intention of standing under that Cross? Well; and what do you see there? The Head, crowned with thorns: and why? To atone for the pride which the Humble King abhors. And you—you, His bride—cannot endure to be found fault with unjustly. That the Jews said of Him, 'He hath a devil, and is mad' is, I suppose, of no moment. You cannot bear to see another preferred to you. 'This Sister is made precentor; oh, I could have sung so well. That Sister is made *tourière;* she has often fallen asleep, and I never did. This is infirmaress, and she once mixed wrong medicines, and I—I once, when wrong were prescribed, gave the right. Do you not remember, Sister ——?' No, my daughter, do not appeal to Sister *any one;* if you wish to appeal, appeal to him who put such thoughts into your heart, the accuser of the bre-

thrèn, Satan. Well; and you would see those pierced Hands: pierced, why? Not only for deeds ill done in His servants; but for deeds which might have been well done, and were not. And you think, and say, 'I might have done so and so, but I scarcely had the time; indeed I am sorry:' and that all? His Tongue was drenched with vinegar and gall, and you, Bride of CHRIST, can sometimes speak so unkindly, so harshly, of those whom you ought most to cherish, —and so little of Him Whom you love dearest of all? His Ears heard all the reproaches of the blasphemers: 'Let CHRIST the King of Israel descend now from the Cross, that we may see and believe.' 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.' He heard, and remained unmoved: and you, a false, nay, a mistaken report so stirs you up!"

Sit down quickly! No: never, my Sisters; you will try your best. You will, I know, work your truest; no time can be so well spent: no labour so well laid out.

Oh my Sisters! If, for the sake of that dear LORD, whatever mistakes we may make, whatever difficulties we may be baffled by, whatever struggles we may have to press through, we may but be received at last!

And now, &c.

SERMON XXVIII.

After Trinity.

IF YE FAINT NOT.

"Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not."—2 Cor. iv. 1.

"THEREFORE seeing we have this ministry." And as before, so now, we must look back to find out who this "we" is. And it is set down clearly enough in the verse before. "We all," *all*, mind you, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image." So, all Christians that would be so indeed have this ministry or service of their Head: but you, my dear Sisters, as I shall never be weary of telling you, in a more especial manner.

But I think, if we did not beforehand know how the verse ends, we should never have guessed for ourselves: nay, and more, when we were told, we should be disappointed, and call it at first sight poor and discouraging. "Therefore having this ministry:" the service of Him Who left the glory that He had with the FATHER before the world was, to serve us: of Him

to Whom all power is given in Heaven and in earth: of Him Who has promised to be with His people alway, even unto the end of the world: of Him concerning Whom it is written, "I can do all things through CHRIST Which strengtheneth me:" "Therefore having this ministry,"—why, what is there that we ought not to look forward to after such a *therefore?* And not only so, but notice how S. Paul strengthens what he had said; "Therefore, having this ministry, *as we have received mercy.*" Because then we are engaged in this service, and because we have GOD'S especial mercy to keep us on in it, we—what? Why, "we *faint not.*" And can that really be the end of the verse? All this grace, all these promises, all these helps, and then only, not to faint.

Ah, my dearest Sisters, S. Paul teaches us a great lesson there. He knew well enough that on the whole every Christian man must be making way, must be gaining ground in his race, must more completely turn to flight the armies of the aliens. But he also knew that there are times when not to give way, not to give up, not to faint, is in itself a great victory. For see how he elsewhere says the same thing. "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, *to stand.*"

And this, I think, applies to you all more especially. You know, for I never cease to tell you here, and by yourselves, that you must on the whole be making an advance in your Christian life: not an advance to be seen from week to week, nor even necessarily from month to month, but that nevertheless can be distinctly recognised from interval to interval. But then, for your encouragement, you must also remember that you, all of you, above and beyond others, are likely to be thrown into scenes and placed in circumstances where *not to faint* is in itself a triumph: where, as the saying is, "to hold your own" is more difficult and better service than to get forward in easier times. This seems the more fitting to say now, when, in all probability, the half of you will be engaged in GOD's more active service before next Sunday. Then you may have need, and that often and often, to remember these words. Then you may have occasion to feel that not to faint, not to be utterly discouraged, not entirely to break down, is as much as you can do. Very well; be it so. If S. Paul could thus speak of not fainting as an achievement in itself, are you not to thank GOD and to take courage when He gives you the same grace?

But now, see what is the effect of having this ministry, of having undertaken this service.

"We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same Image." The Image of Him, that is, Who was the true Servant as well as the true LORD: serving with Him here, that we may sit down to meat with Him hereafter. And, "from glory to glory." It was His glory here, to be the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, to have no place where to lay His Head, to be despised and rejected of men, a worm and no man, the very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. It is His glory there, to have the "Name that is above every name:" to receive the worship of the elders and the four Living Creatures, and the innumerable company of Saints that are before the Throne. And if, according to your measure, that might but be the change for all of you! If you may but follow Him here, into whatever weariness, or pain, or distress, or danger His path leads you, so as to lie down hereafter in the safe fold, and to wander in the green pastures where none can make you afraid! This same S. Paul has left a form of words which all of you in time will, I hope, be able to take into your mouths. "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the HOLY GHOST witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But

none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." Bonds, indeed, and their day, have passed: but for the rest, whenever you are called from this place, you know that it is to no pleasant duty, to no easy path. And this all of you, my dear Sisters, must remember: that you may lose this world, and not gain the next; that you may minister to others, and yet not hereafter be ministered to by the angels; that you may be with Lazarus in this life, and not have your portion in Abraham's bosom in the next; that each of you must within herself, and for herself, be striving earnestly after that holiness without which no man can see GOD, without which no external good works can avail anything.

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Only do it for His sake, and He That is poor in His poor, He That is sick in His sick, and, being thus poor and sick, condescends to be visited by you, will see that you in nowise lose your reward. It is written, "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." You do wait upon Him, truly and literally: and shall not His own words be fulfilled?

And now you know what that is which the

Prophet calls the Bread of the Mighty and the Wine that blossoms into Virgins. To that feast of fat things, to that type of the everlasting Marriage Supper, your LORD now calls you. And may He Whom we shall receive so give us of His own Might, (we all know how much we need it,) that we may say with a good courage, "Therefore, having this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not."

And now, &c.

SERMON XXIX.

After Trinity.

THE DEFEAT OF MIDIAN.

"And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along."—Judges viii. 13.

THERE is something to me unspeakably comforting in this history of Gideon. I remember, when a child, I clung to it with a childish kind of love, not exactly knowing why or how it seemed to cheer and console me, but yet feeling that it did. The text fits the day: the general story fits all days: let us hear then about the host of Midian and the barley loaf.

About the host of Midian! We have not far to look for that. This very Oratory is full of a legion of it. In the midst of your desks, around this very Altar, those tents are pitched. There was a day, we read in Job, when Satan came to present himself in the presence of the LORD.

He does so still. In the very presence of that glorious Body Which overthrew him, comes the Arch-apostate, the Master-fiend, on his mission of destruction still. The cake of barley bread visits us every morning; the same conflict is renewed: GOD grant, with the same result.

Gideon's marvellous weakness from first to last, that is one great point. The weakest Sister who ever took up her LORD's yoke, is by comparison with him, a heroine. An angel to appear to him, to look on him, to infuse might in him: and yet after that he must overthrow his father's idol by night, because he dared not do that act of faith by day! One miracle of the fleece, and he must ask for another! and still not satisfied! He is commanded to go down to the host, and there he shall receive comfort: but, if he fears, he may take Phurah, his servant; and, as if the LORD GOD of Israel were not enough, he actually does take Phurah! Oh, what dear condescension, oh what compassionate love in the LORD, so to bear with his weakness, so to make coverings and defences for it, so to vouchsafe sign on sign, support after support! I would take the story for myself and for you: that if we are really in earnest in GOD's service, He will make it true; and I pray that I may never forget my lesson in it. My conscience tells me of more times than once when, though He allowed diffi-

culties, I have been angry with them; when I have been vexed and annoyed, because you could not go down to the camp without your Phurahs. So it is that weakness judges weakness: so it is that infinite might compassionates it! Forgive me, dearest Sisters: for in this I need your forgiveness.

But then how marvellous the words of the angel, who was indeed none other than the Angel of the Great Counsel. "Go in *this* thy might." What might? Why, his very weakness. His weakness, which forced him to depend on GOD only, thus became his strength. So with you. I hear, in confession, of falls, infirmities, temptations yielded to; well: go in *this* thy might! I hear of hearts full of fear, hope that dares not lift up its head: go in *this* thy might! I hear of faith sadly dead, love sadly cold, wills sadly irresolute: go in *this* thy might! Look away, from, beyond, past, above, them all: feel, know, remember only, that you have the Omnipotent GOD to lean upon. Of Him only, of Him as your All in all, think; put self out of sight, thought, remembrance. You are only to act, or rather let Him act by you, in faith. And this, my Sisters, applies more especially to you who are going out for us. I know well how repugnant the errand is to flesh and blood. I know how you tremble and are disquieted at

each new application. Try to remember that it is GOD's work, that it will be done somehow: if by your means, GOD be praised! if not by your means, why then, GOD be praised too! Through His great and undeserved love, He may give you good success: but remember, it may be equally of His great and undeserved love, if you have none. I would say to each of you, "Go in this thy might." The more you fear the work itself, see that the more you love the Author of the work; the more you shrink from the task, see that the more tightly you cling to the Task-Master: then there is your strength, then there is your help; there—one way or the other—will be your success!

See how GOD overrules all things to our comfort and help. What in itself more depressing than the darkness of the night, than the valley filled with the hosts of the invaders, not one external sign of help: Gideon to go down there, and that all; why, he knew not; the enemy countless; the vast majority of his own men dismissed; oh how naturally he must have wished those back, whom he had been forced to send away because they bowed down on their knees to drink water. And then two of the soldiers speak. In that gloom, in that danger, he first hears of salvation: the barley bread that smote a tent of Midian, the explanation of the

dream, as of himself. And, dearest Sisters, if you are wise, you will often find comfort in the very words and deeds of your enemies, spiritual or temporal. As I have so often told you, there are temptations which in themselves prove Satan's weakness. When he would persuade you to that which you abhor, when he injects thoughts from which your whole better nature recoils as from a serpent, what is it but that he really says, "At present I have no chance of true success with her: but if I cannot just now conquer, I can torment." These are not temptations which will really hurt; the quiet creeping attack, the gradual falling off, the little declension of faith and hope and love, which you do not notice, these are dangerous; or again, those which come under the guise of an angel of light: those which carry on their forehead the name of some virtue, and especially of zeal.

And then, not only as regards yourselves individually, but as regards you all in a body, you may learn from enemies. Would they speak against you as they do, would you be reproached, reviled, slighted as you are, did they not also acknowledge, and fear too, the work GOD is doing by you? Every hard word thus spoken, every accusation brought against you, only shows that you are gaining ground. Against those who were not successful, who would take the pains

of thus struggling? It is a matter of thankfulness to me, in one sense, that they do thus show that you are making way; and so far I praise GOD for it.

And then see how this barley bread is spoken of. Firstly, it was *barley* bread: the cheapest, commonest kind; again, no form nor comeliness. Then, it came from heaven, it *tumbled* into the host of Midian: then, it not only smote the tent that it fell, but overturned it, so that it lay along. Marvellous type of the victories of the Blessed Sacrament over sin: of its complete triumph; not a passing casual overthrow, but a thorough destruction. Let that be so with you. Oh how countless is the host of enemies which surrounds you! who could hope for victory, but by supernatural means? Truly so: but then take the two points of the story together. The barley loaf was not only the sign and pledge and earnest of, but the guide to conquest: yet there remained much more behind.

There surely was never a more striking emblem than the empty pitchers, and the lamps within the pitchers. Thought and love go first of all to Him Who concealed the light of His Godhead, in the frail vessel of humanity. While this still contained it, oh how few mighty works did He work! oh how trifling were the manifestations of His glory! The time came

for this pitcher to be broken. Made a spectacle to men and angels on Mount Calvary, it was shattered in that day when there was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. It was shattered when, as the heathen philosopher said, "Either the God of nature is distressed, or the frame of nature is being broken up." And then indeed that light did gloriously shine forth; then indeed it flashed despair and terror on all the host of Satan: despair and terror exceeding even that of old time, when the pillar of cloud and fire cast its gloom over the pursuing Egyptians.

But not of Him only, my Sisters, is the type true: to you also does it apply. The lamp in the pitcher is that love of your Lord which enables you to bear and to do what you daily bear and do for Him. He sees it; that little flame, of which the world knows nothing. He knows whether it is burning more or less brightly in the deep recesses of your hearts. I, too, can faintly see: I, too, have sometimes to mourn when its brightness seems a little to be dimmed. I, too, have sometimes to rejoice when its pureness and clearness and fervour return and increase. But what it is will not be known while these pitchers hide it. At any moment, dearest Sisters, you know it well, they may be shattered. Thrown as you are in the way of danger, most exposed to every peril, oh how

prepared should you be for the sudden coming of the Bridegroom! And not only so; but this kind of life, its gradual wear and tear, its frequent anxiety and hardness, must all tend to shatter the poor pitcher. I shall never forget how it was said of me, "that I would sacrifice any or all of you for the principle." It was said, or meant to be said, unkindly; but was it really unkind? Could I grieve, except selfishly,—could I mourn, except with that sorrow that our dear LORD showed to be holy by His grief at the grave of Lazarus, if a short rough passage were to change for any one of you the weariness and painfulness and dangers and fatigues of this life, for eternal rest, rest which should not be more comforting than glorious? Yes: the destruction, however sudden, of the poor pitcher would not be the subject,—could it, ought it to be? of such deep mourning? I used, I remember, to wonder how I should be able to bear the loss of any of you, taken away in the midst of your work, from it, or by it. GOD has in some measure taught me what is the bitterness of the sorrow, yet what the exceeding comfort of the joy. Oh my Sisters, let us try more and more to regard ourselves merely as these pitchers; that have to do their work for a while by remaining whole, but of which a part of the very work is to be broken. GOD knows when, GOD knows how; but when-

ever and however, think of that one verse, "This is My Body, Which is broken for *you*:" Was that Body broken? and we who profess to be His followers, we who have a thousand times been fed upon It, are we to be unwilling when our own time is come, to follow Him in this too!

Dearest Sisters, every night watch, every labour, every fatigue you go through, is but another crack in the clay of this pitcher. It is the light burning, that it may be shining. It is the gradual dissolution of the earthly tabernacle. Every laborious case of nursing is another stroke to the same end, another nail—to use the common expression—in that coffin. Also, it is another step to Him Whom you love. Watch but for one night by one of the poor, and you are a good step nearer to Him, not only by the time that has passed, but by the strength which has been expended.

And to Him, to take you as seems best, I can trust you, my Sisters. He can do, (oh how infinitely!) better for you, than I can! When that last final attack shall be made: when the victory, once gained, is gained for ever: when the light must be removed from the covering, He Himself will break the pitchers which have been the receptacles of His grace and love! He will do it, oh how tenderly, in the act: He will guard them, oh how safely, in the fragments: He

will gather them again, oh how marvellously, into vessels of glory!

The Body, which you will now worship, dearest Sisters, was once in like manner broken, the first-fruits of all ours: and as surely as it is now glorious at the right Hand of the FATHER, though under its humble veil of bread and wine also present with us, so will you, even here incorporated with it, there be made like unto it.

And now, &c.

SERMON XXX.

After Trinity.

THE SERVICE OF JACOB.

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her."—Gen. xxix. 20.

I HAVE no doubt that the general feeling about this verse is: How different the effect of Jacob's love from that which I should have expected! Therefore the time short, because the affection strong! Should we not rather have looked that every hour would seem a day, every month a year? Certainly so, in some cases: but there are one or two points to be noticed which may serve to explain the difficulty.

But first, let us see a little into the mystical meaning of this history. And before we do that, I should like, seldom as I speak to you about the wretched controversies of the day, to say a few words about one of them. For any one who has, however imperfectly, read the Books of Genesis and Exodus in their higher

and celestial sense, must have the witness in himself that they are absolutely genuine, and entirely authentic. The external arguments are of course quite irrefutable: they have seen victories over error again and again, and will do so till that temporary victory of Antichrist, of which perhaps the present attacks on the Bible are the first faint shadow. But it is the argument, as written in our own hearts, which is not only the dearer, but the infinitely stronger. When in Isaac carrying the wood and toiling up Mount Moriah, we see the Truer Isaac bearing His Cross up Mount Calvary: when in Jacob's pronouncing the blessing with crossed hands, and Joseph's displeasure thereat, we see the blessings which still flow from the Tree of Salvation, which yet to the Jews is a stumbling-block: when in the divided Red Sea, and the intervening cloud, and the drowning Egyptians, we see the Sacrament of Baptism in its two parts of water and the Holy Ghost, and the death unto sin thereby: when of the manna, in a higher sense, we may say,

> "Ecce Panis Angelorum
> Factus Cibus viatorum,"

then we are quite sure that the sacrifice of Isaac, the blessing of Ephraim and Manasses, the passage of the Red Sea, the descent of the manna,

are real facts. What? shall GOD have made a true Antitype—an Antitype the effects of which we feel daily in ourselves, (effects of which we are as certain as we are of our own existence,) and a false type? You might as well say that the sun could cast a false shadow from an object: you might as well say that the scene stamped for ever in the photograph never had any reality of existence.

"Jacob served for Rachel seven years." And who is the True Jacob, the glorious supplanter of the ancient enemy? Who is He That was an exile from His FATHER's House, and came into the far distant land of His kindred, first taking to Himself the Jewish Church as His Leah: tender-eyed, that is, short-sighted, as she was: short-sighted, not to see Himself in the prophecies, Himself in the types, Himself in the histories; and then afterwards betrothing to Him on the Cross that true Rachel, His dear, His hard-won, His spotless Church? That, in one of His first sayings, referred to that other Israel's first vision, the ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reaching to Heaven, and the angels of GOD ascending and descending upon it? And who is the Rachel for whom He laboured? Shall we take it of that Church which He lived to institute, which He died to sacramentalize, which He liveth again, and for

ever, to defend? Or shall we take it of each individual soul, as dearly loved by Him, as if it, and it alone, were beside Him in the wilderness? Either way, notice this. The time of the first Jacob's service for his Rachel was seven years. That dear LORD, of Whom he was the faint type, wrought on earth but three years and a half. Does the likeness still hold good? Of a surety it does: for it teaches that the earthly labours of our LORD for His Church, and for each individual soul, were but the half of His whole task. His weariness, His watchings, His fastings, His bearing all manner of evil, His being set at nought, scourged, crowned with thorns, spit upon, smitten with the reed,—all this ended, and ended for ever, when He bowed His Head and gave up the ghost. But all this was but half. Then began that which, till death is swallowed up in victory, will never cease: His Intercession. As Victim and as Priest He saves us; as Victim He suffered and died: as Priest He ever liveth to make intercession for us. See, then, the completeness of the seven years: they melt into the glorious octave of eternity.

I might take it, (it has been taken before,) not of seven years' service, but of seven periods of suffering, each containing in itself more than a year of ordinary pain and service: those successive periods of the Passion, each of which was

ended, and as it were crowned, by one of the Seven last Words. In those words, and the actions of which they were but the expression, He indeed served for you; there He forgave: "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" there He promised the Home: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise;" there He consecrated human suffering: "I thirst;" there He hallowed human sympathy: "Woman, behold thy son: Behold thy mother;" there He gave comfort when we are forsaken: "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" there He changed death into sleep: "FATHER, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit;" there He accomplished His design of love: "It is finished."

And now, dear Sisters, here is a marvellous lesson for you. You have most of you been out on GOD's active service, isolated from all that is dearest to you, debarred from every means of grace, a stranger among strangers, exposed to weariness, coarseness, roughness, utter want of kindness and sympathy. Has not the time seemed long? Has not the sun appeared to go very, very slowly down the sky? Have you not counted the days, as children at school, that would end your banishment? Very, very natural, dear Sisters; and GOD forbid I should

hastily judge it. Though I do not know it for myself, I can imagine something of that loneliness, that isolation, that desolateness of heart and affections: that saying with David, "Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself; for I went with the multitude, and brought them forth into the house of GOD, in the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among such as keep holy day." But, dearest Sisters, did our LORD so count the time of His exile here? It "seemed unto Him but a few days, for the love He had to her." So far your love falls short of His, and so far, too, your faith falls short of what it ought to be. If it were really, and in very deed our dear LORD on Whom you were attending, let your isolation be what it might, let the cottage be never so desolate, the inmates never so coarse, then indeed those weeks or months would, for the joy that was set before you, seem but a few days. And yet, He has said it Himself, "In that ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Try, dear Sisters, you who are likely ere long to leave us, never thus to count the days; try that your love to Him may make them seem but a few hours. Difficult! It is difficult indeed. But then a Sister's life is made up of difficulties: but, thank GOD, of conquered difficulties! Difficult! yet He did it before you:

and you, through Him That strengtheneth you, may do it after Him.

And notice this. I have often spoken to you of the diabolical caricature that Satan loves to make of the dearest gifts of GOD. As Antichrist will be a complete and hideous parody of CHRIST,—so here the three years and a half of our dear LORD's Life on earth are copied in the three years and a half in which, Satan triumphant, the two witnesses will prophesy, clothed in sackcloth, and so, typically, in the three years and a half in which the kingdom of Israel remained without rain.

"Jacob served for Rachel seven years; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." Simple words: but oh what a depth of meaning! Each of you, my Sisters, is that Rachel. On each of you the Bridegroom of Virgin souls has set His love; for each of you He has been content to labour: content to labour? content to think nothing of the labour; each of you He, the Lover of Chastity, has betrothed to Himself: and the end and consummation of all that blessedness will be, when with joy and gladness you shall be brought and shall enter into the King's Palace. Then, as the old hymn says,—

"Then Jacob into Israel, from earthlier self estranged,
And Leah into Rachel for ever shall be changed.

Then all the halls of Syon for aye shall be complete,
And in the Land of Beauty all things of beauty meet."

Yes, in this sense Leah is the secular life, Rachel the Religious: or rather, each soul that has embraced it: and so the text applies to you all, my Sisters; and so must the sermon too.

"He served for Rachel." He did indeed. Think, not only of that service when He came down from the bosom of the FATHER to be despised and rejected of this world, when He went about doing all good and bearing all evil, promising to men an eternal habitation, and Himself not having where to lay His Head; rejected by His Own from all kindness and sympathy, yet learning, in that He Himself was tempted, to succour them also that are tempted. No, nor yet only of that hour when this good and faithful Servant, because He could give no more, gave His Own Life: when He served you in ascending the Hill of Calvary, served you in mounting the Watch Tower of the Cross, served you in humbly bowing His Head, as the sign and token that His service to man was accomplished. No: but beyond all this; see how He serves you now. Oh, my Sisters, knowing you as I do, knowing you as no other on earth can know you, it is marvellous to me how He serves each and all of you! How He, raised far above all principality, and power, and

might, and every name that is named, is not unmindful of His Brides on earth: lays Himself out, as it were, to help you, where you most need assistance; to minister to you, where you are least capable of serving yourselves; to defend you where Satan's assaults are most frequent and violent, and likely to be most deadly. Dare any of you not put out her whole strength of body, soul, and spirit in His service, when He thinks nothing too much to undertake in yours?

Oh, if you could but realise your own position, what happy Sisters you would be! That He, on the one hand, vouchsafes to accept your service, and on the other, condescends to give you His! Oh, how happy in receiving! Oh, how happy in giving! Think how it is He Who listens to all your sorrows and your sins, when you tell them to me here; you have but to call upon Him, and He is present to hear, present to forgive, present to give you His own sweet Absolution! Think how, day by day, He prepares for you a Royal Banquet, such a Banquet as, until He devised it Himself, eye had not seen, nor ear had heard, neither had entered into the heart of man to conceive! Think how very, very patient He is with all your waywardness, all your unstableness: not the less faithful to you when you falter, not the less loving you when you are cold! "O Lord Jesus," says S. Ful-

bert of Chartres, "others may adore Thee as the Great King That shall have dominion from one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end; others may worship Thee as the Counsellor, Who didst devise such marvellous means whereby Thy banished ones should be brought back to Thee; others, as the Prince of Peace, the peace which is past comprehension even here on earth, but which can only be made perfect in Heaven; others, as the Mighty God, by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not anything made that was made; but I would rather adore Thee as the Good Servant, the faithful Servant to such ungrateful masters, the Servant that didst make Thyself of no reputation, and wast found in fashion as a man; and being found in fashion as a man, didst humble Thyself, and didst become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

When I see how He, dearest Sisters, your Master, the Beloved, Who is yours and Whose you are, how He still labours for you, leaves nothing undone that may comfort you, lavishes, so to speak, His labours to serve you, thinks no pain too great, if He may only help you onward to Him; thus it is that I must say, "O Lord Jesu, Who dost so love these Thine elect ones, that Thou thinkest no labour, no care, no ten-

derness too great: they for their part seek to serve Thee; Thou knowest that they do, for Thou knowest all things. But yet often how poorly! often how half-heartedly! often how coldly! They can serve Thee, if Thou wilt but touch them with the fire of Thy Love; they have served Thee when Thou hast given them grace: only give them the same grace always, only touch them always with the same fire! And teach me to think no labour, no care, no love sufficient for those who are so dear to Thee here, whom, if they persevere to the end, Thou wilt so honour there! Only give me wisdom, and tenderness, and grace to support them, and then, by whatever labour or suffering it is to be purchased, Thy will be done!"

And now let us reverse the meaning. My Sisters, let Jacob be every faithful soul: let Rachel be the grace, the wisdom, the help, the love, that the LORD of all grace, all wisdom, all help, all love gives you: in short, the type of our LORD Himself. In the Proverbs, we have the same LORD set forth under the figure of Wisdom —a female type still. Is it not for Him that you have to labour the seven years, that is, the fully accomplished time of His work that He has appointed to you? Is there not, as Job speaks, an appointed time? "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening."

That love is to be gained, that precious pearl to be won, that strength to be made your own.

And now let us see the difficulty, in this sense, about the seven years being but a few days.

Where was Jacob during all these seven years? Parted from Rachel? Not so. Continually with her; speaking to her; hearing her speak; he knowing her welfare, she knowing his; looking for, it is true, even a dearer possession of her by-and-by, but still not separated from her even now. My Sisters: this, as they all say, those masters of the Spiritual Life, ought to be your condition here. You are working to this end that—whatever surpassing glory that may signify, (we must use vague words, for human language breaks down, as S. Paul tells us, beneath the weight of heavenly things—whatever surpassing glory that may signify,) you may follow Him whithersoever He goeth, you may sit down at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Well: but He is with you still, with you in a thousand different ways. With you, chiefly, when He gives you that Heavenly Manna; with you, when you are alone with Him here; with you, in Absolution; with you, in prayer. Now hear what S. Fulbert says, though not speaking of this especial text: We are banished for a time from Him? Surely we are. But, my Sisters, does He never in that time visit

you?—does He not comfort you, as Joseph did Jacob, with the good things of that far land? Suppose that there were no Sacraments, no prayers, nothing by which you might receive Him, or He speak to you: suppose that He had said, Years hence, many or few, only keep My laws, only remain in My love, and thou shalt see Me as I am; meanwhile the gates of Heaven are barred from earth: no prayer shall come up, no blessing go down:—what then? What a long, sorrowful, miserable widowhood! But now, every moment is alive with blessings. Thanks, sacrifices, hopes, prayers, vows, ascending on the golden ladder: happy answers, dear assurances of love, certainties of pardon—above all, the Angels' Food,—descending to earth.

This, to my mind, my Sisters, explains the text. Had Jacob been banished from Rachel, then the seven years might have seemed seventy: but he was with her, while yet working for her, dear love uniting itself with dearer hope; and no marvel that so happy a time, though not actually the happiest, seemed short.

But there is another sense in which we may take Leah and Rachel. Some of you have known what it is to be longing for the Religious Life, while yet engaged in the secular. Hundreds of your own sex and age are, at this very

moment, yearning for a Sisterhood, while other manifest domestic duties, or the purely arbitrary command of a parent, keep them where they are. Now see what happened to Jacob. Leah is the type, of course, of the secular life, fruitful in the eyes of the world: fulfilling, if purely carried on for the dear love of CHRIST, plain straightforward duties, which every one can appreciate. But Leah was weak eyed: Rachel is by interpretation, seeing. So of the two lives; the one neither can, nor ever will, look so deeply into the mysteries of the next world as the other. And then Rachel's death: there they see your spending, my Sisters, your spending and being spent in fruitfulness of good works.

Well: Jacob had first to win Leah, by his seven years' toil. Now it is a common mistake to fancy that after his marriage with her he had to begin another seven years for Rachel, and that, at the end of them, he received her. Not so. After his marriage with Leah, he kept the seven days of the wedding-feast: and then, directly, Rachel was his own: for whom, after that, he might work the other seven years while she was his own.

Now, in that sense, there is a very dear meaning, applied to those who are longing for a Religious Life, though not as yet privileged to have begun it. Do your duty fully, cheerfully,

gladly, in the worldly life, and then you shall have that for which you long.

But there is also another meaning for you, my Sisters. Whatever may seem a small, poor, mean task, you know, or ought to know, what George Herbert says,

> "Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
> Makes that and th' action fine."

That is your Leah now.

It is only a different harmony to the same melody: the Cross before the Crown. Now it is Leah before Rachel.

If that only be so: if you accept the one heartily, if you fulfil her week, the poor, fleeting, perishing week of this world, then the eternal joy, then the exceeding great reward, then the full sight indeed—the Beatific Vision!

And now, &c.

SERMON XXXI.[1]

After Trinity.

THE MYSTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VESPER OFFICE.

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the LORD."—S. Luke i. 46.

CAST your thoughts back, my Sisters, over that long series of fifteen hundred years that separates us from the tenth persecution; and then remember that the *Magnificat* has, without one day failing, gone up like evening incense from thousands of churches, to the Throne of GOD. Night unto night has uttered this knowledge: the bright, sunny evenings of fifteen hundred summers, the calm, quiet light of their autumns, the storm and cold and frost of their winters, these passed on in their course: but the Song of the Virgin, always the same, always so familiar, linked the successive variations of time together, changeless amidst a changing

[1] 1861. One of an intended, but unfinished, set of sermons on the Six Sayings of S. Mary.

world. Doubtless it is partly the effect of association, but yet one can hardly help feeling that there is a quiet loveliness in it, not unlike the gentlest and calmest of summer evenings; that it naturally belongs to that time, rather than, as it is said in the East, to the morning. And then, think too of the countless multitude of lips that have joined in this divine hymn, who now are uniting in the Song of Moses: think of the countless feelings under which it has been said: how it has seemed to rejoice with them that rejoiced, and to weep with them that wept. Think of the many antiphons that have made it, now fitted for Paschal, now for Christmas, now for Ascension joy; how it has also responded to Lent and Advent penitence; how it has, in turn, spoken of Passiontide: how it has become "all things to all men." And surely we shall feel that never were words so blessed, so hallowed, so dear to the Church, as these, the third recorded utterance of the Mother of God.

You have all of you noticed the complete analogy there is between the service of Lauds and Vespers: each with its five Psalms and Antiphons; each with the short lection; the *Magnificat* of the one answering to the *Benedictus* of the other; then, the hymn; then, the varying collect. Now, I have often said that the more we study our Hours, the more depth

of meaning we shall find in their order. There is not a single arrangement about them which has not its own lesson for us: and I might well, the other day, compare them to the flowers and apples which are to stay and comfort every faithful soul under that heavenly home-sickness, for which there is no cure but one. And as *Magnificat* is the key-stone of the whole service of Vespers, I will rather speak to-night about the office than the Canticle: if I can only show you somewhat more of its beauty than you may yet have seen.

In the first place then, Vespers have, as we know, *five* Psalms. Why five? And there are several reasons. Five, in honour of the most precious and life-giving Wounds of our dear LORD, Himself the evening Sacrifice of the world. And you may observe that the antiphons have almost always a distinct reference to His most precious Passion. For example, that of the 132nd Psalm is, "And all His trouble." When was trouble ever like that of Calvary? And what hope for us but from that? "LORD, remember David, and all His trouble!" Is not that beautifully said? So again: "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He." There we learn, still with reference to those Salutary Wounds, to contrast the two wills of our LORD, that Divine Will by which, "whatsoever He

pleased, that He did:" that human will, according to which, "CHRIST pleased not Himself;" according to which He was not heard; according to which He said, "O My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." So, remember, my Sisters, that in every evening reciting these Psalms, you are beseeching your LORD to offer the remembrance of the Cross and Passion to His FATHER and yours, for your souls. See the prints of the nails and of the spear in them, and nightly you will love them more.

Again: five Psalms, because not one of our five senses, but is an inlet to sin; and, "in many things, we offend all," daily. We offer one Psalm then, for the sins of each sense; in this sense making them the sacrifice of penitence, as, in the former, they are of hope. Think of the sins of the tongue, when, in that confession, you say, "I said, in my haste;" or again, "Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips;" think of the sin of so often having not turned away your eyes from vanity, when you say, "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes." Yes: so are you to think over that past day's offences, as yet to look to the healing Wounds that you also commemorate.

And notice this also. The Psalms of each day are more or less applicable to the day. Thus, on Thursday, the day of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist: "I will satisfy her

poor with bread." And again, "Who giveth food to all flesh:" that true Food, that blessed and celestial Manna, which gives life to the world. So, on Saturday, the night of the Resurrection, see how beautifully the Psalms are appropriated. The first: "Blessed be the LORD my strength: Who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight." The song of victory over Goliath, how shall we not apply it to the triumph over the spiritual Goliath, and to death conquered by Death? Then see, how for this great victory the Church stirs herself up to give thanks. "Praise the LORD, O my soul: while I live will I praise the LORD." And why? Because, (as the Psalm ends,) in spite of the kings of the earth standing up, and the rulers taking counsel together "against the LORD and against His Anointed," in spite of the reed of scorn, the purple robe of mockery, the title of derision, in spite of the Head bowed in death, and the new sepulchre in which the LORD's Body reposed: "The LORD thy GOD, O Sion, *shall* be King for evermore: and throughout all generations." Then, having thus first incited herself to praise, the Church next calls on the whole world: "O praise the LORD, for it is a good thing to sing praises unto our GOD." And lastly, looking away from the changes and chances of this mortal life, she fixes her

thoughts on her triumphant Sister in heaven, with: "Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem." In like manner, Friday Vespers follow the Passion: Wednesday, the Betrayal: Monday, the Nativity: Tuesday, the Epiphany. You can work the Psalms out for yourselves: and the more you do so, the more truly will you be able to say, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

Now let us observe the lesson. On six days of the week, it is, you know, "The LORD direct your hearts into the love of GOD, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST." For the coming on of every night ought to remind us of the approach of the Day of the LORD, so to "come as a thief in the night." And therefore we have an Advent lection. But on Saturdays it is, "Blessed be GOD, even the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father of mercies and the GOD of all comfort:" in thanksgiving for the true comfort, the only comfort worth the name, which that night brought to pass, namely, the Resurrection. For, "if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in JESUS, will GOD bring with Him," S. Paul may well continue, "wherefore comfort one another with these words."

We have said five Psalms: the *Magnificat* then comes sixth in number. And, as we have

already made special confession of our sins in regard to the five senses, made special invocation of the Passion in regard to the Five Wounds of our dear LORD, made special mention of the Advent in the lesson, now we say the Hymn of the Incarnation. And rightly it is the sixth in number, because, in the sixth age of the world, and not till then, did the LORD take on Himself our flesh. And then, the reason of the suffrages that follow, for all sorts and conditions of men, is, because we are reminded by the coming of darkness, of those on whom the Sun of Righteousness has not risen with healing in His Wings; and so we end with prayer for them, thus making the conclusion of the Office a work of charity.

That, my Sisters, is but the hastiest sketch of the general principle of our Vespers: and you see the deep meaning which has dictated every part. You, who give so many hours to what they used to call the Work of GOD, that is, the recitation of the Psalms, are bound, so far as you can, to enter into their many mysteries. And, as I am now on this subject, I will say a few more words, about Compline.

We said that Lauds and Vespers were the two offices that had the closest analogy; and it is so. But there is one thing in which Compline agrees with Lauds, and differs from every

other service. It is, in prefixing an additional verse and response to the "O God, make speed to save us." At Compline, "Turn us then, O God, our Saviour." At Lauds, "Let Thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us." And why so? At Compline, because, before commencing the last Hour of the day, we ought to feel that its many sins need to be forgiven before we can, with any confidence, call on Him to "make speed to save us." This is the feeling of the Universal Church: Compline always begins so. But the verse and response at Lauds are English only; and it is curious to see how the same national character clings to a people in their services. Just as, contrary to the universal custom of the Church, the English Prayer Book, since the Reformation, has prefixed a penitential opening to its first service, so, also contrary to the universal custom of the Church, the English Prayer Book did, before the Reformation; by prefixing, at her first service, "Let Thy merciful kindness," &c., to the ordinary beginning.

Then follow the four Psalms. Four, to signify that we lie down in the faith of the Church, as expressed by the four Gospels. The first is the Psalm of peace: "I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest." The next, of hope: "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust." But, because hope without fear is presumption,

the next is the Psalm of fear, dwelling as it does on temptation. Its keynote, they say, is in those two verses: "Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night: nor for the arrow that flieth by day; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness: nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day;" for those embrace every possible kind of temptation. The first, slighter and concealed: "the terror by night." The next, slighter but manifest: "the arrow that flieth by day." The third, more dangerous and concealed: "the pestilence," (but the Hebrew, much more grandly, is, "the *Thing*,") "that walketh in darkness." The fourth, more dangerous and open: "the sickness that destroyeth in the noon-day." The fourth Psalm is the Psalm of charity. Thus, then, you offer these four Psalms for these four graces: peace, hope, godly fear, unity. But why do we end the thirty-first Psalm at the sixth verse? Not only because our LORD there concluded it, but because it is the Psalm of hope and trust in His most precious Passion; and as He suffered, not only in the sixth age of the world, but in the sixth hour of the sixth day of the week, rightly therefore we stop at the sixth verse. I might speak of the hymn and the lection; but I will rather pass on to the *Nunc Dimittis*. As that was good old Simeon's death-song, after which he departed in

peace, so, as the lying down in our beds is the image of lying down in the grave, we take those words of departure on our lips; and, in those dark hours, comfort ourselves with the thought of the "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel."

One thing more. Matins, Prime, Tierce, Sexts, Nones, consist each of seven parts. The Verse and Gloria, Hymn, Psalms, Lection, Verse and Response, Suffrages, Collect. But Vespers, Compline, and Lauds, have an eighth part: the Evangelical or Scriptural Canticle. And why? Because those three Hours have to do with that great octave, the LORD's Resurrection.

> "For on this day, the *eighth* and *first*,
> Our rising LORD death's fetters burst."

Because, early in the morning, He rose; at Vesper time, He manifested Himself to His disciples; at Compline, He said, "Peace be unto you."

I have spoken to you, my Sisters, somewhat differently this evening from my usual way: but I do desire above all things to see you throw yourselves into your Hours; not reciting them as task-work, not going through them as a mere act of obedience, but learning more and more how He Whom we desire to love best is in

them, as the precious stone is in a casket; how, in a thousand lovely representations, there He will reveal Himself; how near you are to Him in every verse; how His Word, being tried to the uttermost, will be found more and more full of Himself. And so you will be able more and more truly to take those words on your lips, which you repeat so often: "I am as glad of Thy Word as one that findeth great spoils."

And now, &c.

SERMON XXXII.[1]

After Trinity.

WITH JESUS.

"They took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS."—Acts iv. 13.

I LOOK away from that hall of judgment in the palace of the High Priest: from those assembled Pharisees and elders and scribes, in all the pomp and glory of the Jewish robes: from the soldiers in waiting round that place of most unrighteous sentence: from the bright gardens and the marble terraces which sloped down the Hill of Evil Counsel to the valley. I see a larger scene of spectators than that. I am thinking of lookers on, not merely of this world, but of the unseen state, enemies and friends, all intent to behold what is done, all ready to pass their sentence. And in the midst of this I see a few weak women: very weak, very trembling, very helpless in themselves, but endued with all might and all wisdom in their LORD; with the world against them, and nothing

[1] August, 1857.

but the power of the truth for them; with their own sinful natures against them, and the Grace of the Holy Ghost for them; with every earthly consideration to hold them back, and only the love of Christ to constrain them: and the dearest and most earnest desire of my heart is this, that of you, dearest Sisters, it might also be said, in speaking of that so great cloud of witnesses with which you are compassed, "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

And what is this assembly? Who are they that are thus every moment passing their own judgments on each of you? And first call to mind that dear thought that, when you kneel here in prayer, you can never kneel alone; in your downsitting and uprising, in your work and your rest, in your sleeping and in your waking, you can never be by yourselves; that the guardian Angel of each of you is present as a guard and a guide and a comfort; that more especially in that hour when you are in the presence of the Body and Blood of Him Who is the King of the Angels, as well as your Lord and your God, that blessed Spirit is also adoring—that blessed Spirit is also longing to enter more fully into so great a mystery; is filled with love of, and wonder at the God Who for your sakes, and that He may be your sustenance as well as your ransom,

thus veils His eternal and incomprehensible Majesty under the form of Bread and Wine. As those Angels follow you from hour to hour, see your actions, read your thoughts, look into your hearts with a knowledge of you so infinitely more certain, dearest Sisters, even than mine, God grant that it may be said of that band of guardian-spirits, "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus!"

And the Tempter as well as the Guardian is ever at your side. He knows each weak point in your nature; he knows where he has triumphed before, and hopes to triumph again; he remembers a long list of falls for the past which give him hope for the future. He sees the privileges you have, and knows that if you are not walking worthy of them, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in that day than for you; he knows the resolutions you have made, and knows also how hard they are to be kept; he sees your dedication of yourselves to God, and knows how pure, how holy, how free from spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, should they be who thus offer themselves to be especial temples of the Holy Ghost, who thus would claim the portion and inheritance of Brides of the Immaculate Lamb. And knowing all this, does not he the more long to have you, that he may sift you as wheat? to cause you, you that have put your hands to the

plough, now to look back? Does he not long, by your fall, to give great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme? He comes and tempts you then, each according to her own especial inclination, each, as may be most likely to prevail over her more peculiar infirmity. And oh, that of him too it might be said, when he retires baffled and confounded and ashamed, defeated, not by you, but by the Grace of GOD in you; terrified, not at your strength, but at the might of your own LORD, he "took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS!"

"I believe in the Communion of Saints." Of all with all: of those set free from the flesh, with those who are still militant in it; but chiefly, no doubt, of those blessed ones, now in Paradise, with those who are travelling homeward by the same road to their home, by the same ascent they also went up to the House of the LORD. Those of your own sex, of your own calling, of your own desires, dear Sisters, who now know what it is to have come again with the sheaves of joy, after having cast abroad the seed of weeping; now know what are the kisses of His Mouth, Whose feet it was here their one joy to wash with the tears of penitence, and to anoint with the ointment of good works. They know how there is but one hope, one strength, one possibility of success for Sisters; only one Rock that

can afford a hiding-place to such doves; only one garden that can shelter such lilies. They see, doubt it not, how far you are clinging to Him Whom they so ardently loved here, and now so perfectly enjoy there: they see whether all the best powers of soul and body are His and His only; they can tell whether "Whose I am and Whom I serve" is written in your heart of hearts. Again I say it, God grant that of those happy virgins it might be said with regard to you, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

"We will not have this Man to reign over us." You know in what way the world now expresses the feeling that it always must have. The thing remains the same, the phrase will alter. And now, as you know, it is, "We will not believe that this Man gives us His Flesh to eat, and His Blood to drink: we will not believe further than in an outside figure of speech in the mystery of His Incarnation: we will not receive the consequences which flow from it: we will not credit that there is a higher state than that of an ordinary Christian life, that there is a place and a name better than of sons and daughters, that there is a diadem for the hundred and forty and four thousand which the rest of the redeemed cannot possess. We will not believe it, and we will not let others believe it

either, and woe to them that shall attempt it!" "Let us see if their words be true, and let us prove what shall happen in the end of them. Let us examine them with despitefulness and torture, that we may know their meekness, and prove their patience." Is not this so, my dear Sisters? and can you overcome such opposition by any means but, "They" (for even Annas and Caiaphas could see that; "they," for the mark of the Cross is visible to bad as well as good,) "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS?"

And oh, dearest Sisters, in little desolate cottages, amidst disease and misery, in solitude and isolation; when the heat and burden of the day seem almost more than you can bear: when you go, like your dear LORD, not to be ministered to, but to minister: when you desire, like His Blessed Apostle, to be able to say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy:" in hospitals, when you pass from one bedside to another, from one form of that wretchedness and death which sin brought into the world to another, I can conceive nothing more glorious, nothing more happy, nothing that would more tend, if I may use the words of S. Paul, to fulfil my joy, than that in such scenes and of such spectators, sufferers alike and bystanders,

it might be said, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus!" Is it not a privilege beyond all privileges thus to have the power of making that dear Name as ointment poured forth? of teaching others, almost whether they will or not, that His must be a love indeed for the sake of which you thus devote yourselves to the poorest and meanest of His servants? It is enough to make one's heart burn, when I think of the honour that may thus be, that has thus been, done to Him; and know that in you and by you He may thus win Himself great glory.

Are not these spectators enough to stir up the most negligent in striving for such a crown? And shall I tell you yet of one more? one, whose very office it is to be a spectator, and that in how much weakness and fear and trembling he best can tell? Dear Sisters, that Priest would be wretched indeed who could hear a Confession without fear, but most of all, a Sister's Confession. You, perhaps, can scarcely judge of the anxiety, lest you should not have been walking worthy of your calling—not doing what I know you might have been doing; allowing yourselves to be negligent; unwilling to run with patience the race that is set before you. There is but one end and aim in your kneeling by me: it is that you may be brought to the one only true Priest. There is but one virtue in this Sacrament: the

Blood and the Water that flowed from the side of the one only True Victim. But when you do let me see that you have not been running in vain, neither labouring in vain: when, if I hear of temptations, I also hear of victories: when, if I must needs be told of falls, it is also, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise:" then do you not think that it is a joy and happiness to compensate for any suffering when thus of me it might be said, "He took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS?"

And how did they thus come by the knowledge that the Apostles had been with their LORD? It says before: "because they perceived their boldness." It is that steady, unwavering, unflinching resolution, that GOD's you are, and will be; His will, and not yours, you will follow; His law, and not the world's, you will accept; His, and not earthly love, you will seek; His, and not earthly praise, you will care for: that must give the stamp to all your life. The fire and water here, if the wealthy place hereafter; the valley of Baca here, if the appearance before the GOD of gods in Sion; the six lions on either side of the ascent now, if the Throne of the true Solomon then; the three days' fast in the city, if after it Esther may be received into Shushan the Palace. We see all this, we say

it, we mean it; but the trial comes, and then, "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

This boldness, then, in the first place; but there was another sign also. "Surely thou art a Galilæan, for thy speech agreeth thereto." Your words then, dear Sisters, as well as your actions, must be such as belong to that mountain in the true Galilee, where your LORD has promised that some day or other you shall behold His Face. Yes; the speaking His words, as well as doing His work, is a grace which you must try for over and over again, which you must pray for, labour after, determine to obtain, never rest satisfied till you have obtained: that no reserve, no fear, no shyness, no awkwardness, may ever hinder you from speaking of Him, from asking yourselves by whom is He to be spoken of if not by you? "Surely thou art a Galilæan:" then the inference is easy, thy speech must agree thereto. And yet once more: we read of another of whom it was taken knowledge that he had been with JESUS. When Moses came down from the mountain the skin of his face shone; that is, in some faint degree, he was transfigured into the LORD's likeness. And so, when you have been with JESUS, it must be with you. To act and suffer for Him, to speak of Him; but of all things, to be like Him!

"They took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS." And you have been with JESUS. Many and many an hour have you spent with Him in this very Oratory; and a great comfort and delight to me it is that you all feel the consolation of thus kneeling in His very Presence. Twice already this week you have had that privilege; and, as of old, this is again the third time that JESUS will thus show Himself unto you. But then, when you go out of that Presence Chamber, ought not His Love to be very warm at your hearts? Ought not this to be the one abiding feeling that to Him Who gives you so much, what can you give short of your all? That for Him Who has thus chosen you, thus loved you, thus enabled you to choose the better part which shall never be taken from you, no effort is impossible, no suffering is to be dreaded? Ought you not to go forth with your hope animated and strengthened, with your faith confirmed? You know you can never come forth from that Visit to the Blessed Sacrament as you entered. That hour is a telling hour in your lives. If, then, you allow your thoughts to wander, if then you acquiesce in your affections growing cold, if then your words indeed go up, but your heart of hearts is not with them, believe me, dear Sisters, that is then fulfilled which is written in Isaiah, "The Angels of peace

shall weep bitterly." But God grant, as He does grant, better things. God grant that such a veil may only quicken your longings after the country where there is no veil! that such a Sacramental Presence may stir you up to greater efforts, that one day you may merit to behold the Beatific Vision!

"They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." And is there not another time when you are especially near to Him? Is there not a time when you tell Him of all your sins, all your shortcomings, all your weaknesses, all your miseries? And He, as a most loving and tender Father, as a most merciful and faithful High Priest, as a most wise and Almighty Physician, permits you to hear, not only with your heart, but with your very outward ears, the sentence of His pardon? Of that also it must be said, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Others must see that you are trying against besetting sins more faithfully than before; are falling more rarely than before; are rising again more speedily than before. It is for the future as well as the past that Confession was ordained; it is for the prevention as well as the cure; it is for the help as well as the Absolution. And we may well call this Sacrament the Sacrament of wonders. Not only that God should vouchsafe to forgive sin

after Baptism at all, should provide the remedy after the poison, the plank after the shipwreck. Not only that He should have committed this ministry to the hands of weak and sinful men, saying, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." But that He should have enabled us to avail ourselves of so great a miracle of grace. You know, we all know, that it once seemed impossible to approach that Sacrament; that the effort appeared above human nature; that if this were the safest way, it would be safe in vain so far as we were concerned. And yet the same loving LORD Who at first ordained it led us on to it: led us on, if not so that we should not fear, at all events so that we should not shrink; thus brought us, thus brings us, to Himself; and because He thus brings us, expects that of us that saying should be fulfilled, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS."

And now, dearest Sisters, come to Him that you may receive the Body that was broken, and the Blood that was shed for you, on Mount Calvary. Come to Him in your weakness: He will give you strength. Come to Him in your coldness: He will give you love. Come to Him in your sorrow for sin: He will give you joy. Come to Him as His own chosen ones, and He

will accept you. Come to Him with all your vows on you, and He will enable you to perform them. Come to Him, and beseech Him that this day and every day, when you go forth to your daily occupations, when you enter on your daily struggles, when you struggle with your daily temptations, it may be, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS!"

And now, &c.

SERMON XXXIII.[1]

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

PRAYER.

"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."—S. Luke xviii. 1.

I HAVE been intending, my Sisters, for some time past, to speak to you more immediately on the subject of prayer: not out of my own head, not in my own words: but according to the spirit, I hope, and often in the very expressions of those blessed ones, now with GOD, who, in the time of their earthly tribulations were so earnest in supplication, but who now have long known what it is to have earnest prayer turned into endless praise.

See now the actual amount of hours set apart for prayer in every day, when it is spent as I would wish it to be spent, in this House. O what a marvellous power for good or evil they must have! Oh how they must either be the much

[1] July 29, 1860.

incense before the Throne of God, or how they must—but I will not for one moment believe that, else I should say—or how they must be heaping up wrath against the day of wrath!

Now, in what I am going to say, think that you are hearing, not me, but one of those holy men of old, who spent whole nights, and who taught his children to spend whole nights in prayer to God; one of those who now sleep under the ruins of some of those glorious Abbeys, which they indeed made, in their times, the House of God, and the Gate of Heaven. Think that there is no new way of praying effectually now: that what are your difficulties were theirs: what are their glories may—*shall*, so God will—be yours. And if you find their divisions somewhat stiff and formal, believe me, when you come to think them over, you will learn their truth and their wisdom. You know that this business of prayer, my Sisters, ought to be the chief business and care of your lives: that you never can be true Brides of Christ without constant communion with Him: and that, though, while engaged in His external work, and so of necessity cut off for a while from the possibility of formal prayer, you are not to make yourselves therefore unhappy, yet here lies your great danger, that, the habit once interrupted, when the interruption ceases, Satan will try so hard to make

its effects still continue. And one thing more I ought to say. If there be one condition of life which seems to require constant and earnest prayer more than another, it is that of any persons, to whom the idea of joining a Sisterhood has been proposed: who feel in themselves a certain kind of vocation to it, and yet also have difficulties, whether in themselves or in their circumstances, which make them doubt after all what is GOD's real will concerning them. Surely they ought to be most earnest in asking that the crooked may be made straight, and the rough places plain; that they may not be permitted to decide mistakenly in a matter of such infinite importance; that the promise may be fulfilled and their ears may hear a voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," when they turn to the right hand, or when they turn to the left.

And now, to go to our subject. They tell us, you know, that all prayer may be divided into three kinds: *Supplication*, *petition*, *insinuation*. *Supplication* is when we pray for what good things we need in general, without expressing the particular matter which we desire from GOD: when we leave Him to judge what is really for our good, and do not venture to lay before Him that which we think is requisite for us. To give you an example: it is a supplication of David's, when he says, "Preserve Thou

my soul, for I am holy: my GOD, save Thy servant that putteth his trust in Thee." How he desired to be preserved, neither does he there say, nor can we now know: *that* he left to GOD's infinite love. *Petitioning* is when we offer some definite request: as for example, when the mother of Zebedee's children said, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right Hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom." The third kind—that is, *insinuation*—is when, having a definite good which we desire to receive, nevertheless we do not venture to ask for it in so many words, but only say something which may serve to show what the thing is of which we stand in need: we should call it, in speaking to an earthly friend, hinting at our wish. And so it was when Martha said to our LORD, "LORD, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of GOD, He will give it Thee." She did not venture to ask in so many words for so stupendous a miracle as that one who had been in the grave four days should be raised to life, but she appealed first to that dear Master's love, if the case had been different: "LORD, if Thou *hadst* been here;" and then to His Omnipotence now: "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of GOD, He will give it Thee." Remember then; these are

the three kinds of prayer: supplication, petition, insinuation.

Now supplication itself has generally three parts. First, there is *pleading;* by which, before we ask, we give a reason why our prayer should be heard. Notice, my Sisters, how many of the Church's collects go on this plan. We mean to ask GOD, that though we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet may the pitifulness of His great mercy loose us. The pleading before is, "O GOD, Whose nature and property is always to have mercy and to forgive." We mean, as this week, to pray that all hurtful things may be put away from us. We begin by pleading: "O GOD, Whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth." The next part of supplication is called *gratitude;* when we ask that we may have one thing, because we have already had another, which last-mentioned blessing would be of no use unless we also had that other thing. This is a very favourite way with GOD's Saints in all ages. This, my Sisters, I recommend you never to be weary of using. For example: "Thou, O LORD, didst give me once grace to vow obedience, to do it heartily, freely, willingly, with all my heart and soul. Give me grace now, when I am assaulted by my own self-will, to tread it under foot: to be obedient to others as Thou wast obe-

dient to Thy Blessed FATHER. Thou, O LORD, didst give me grace freely and joyfully to make the vow of chastity: deliver me, O LORD, from all the miserable thoughts that are contrary to it." See, in the Psalms, how often David employs this kind of prayer: "Because Thou *hast* been my Helper, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings *will* I rejoice." And the third part of supplication is called *precaution:* that is, you imagine Satan standing at your right hand to resist you; you fancy what he might say; you think over your weak points, and his strong ones; and then you bring forward some argument why GOD should not hear him. Our LORD, when pleading for Joshua the son of Josedech—as we read in Zechariah—in opposition to Satan, pleading against him, gives a marvellous example of this. "The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan." Why? "The LORD *that hath chosen Jerusalem* rebuke thee." Why? Because this was the FATHER'S special will, that those who had been the miserable slaves of sin, should be built up as living stones in the walls of New Jerusalem. To plead against Joshua that he had been a sinner was only to show that he was one of those to whom GOD'S mercy above all was to be stretched forth: far from being an argument against him, it was an argument for him.

Now, further, in the very nature of things, *supplication* is that of which the prayers of the Church most frequently consist. She cannot make request to GOD for individual wants: those prayers which are written for such—however well meant, and however careful—must always to a certain extent be cold. And this also. Supplication may always be made to GOD without any limit, of, "if it be Thy Will;" because the thing we wish, whether some advance in grace, or some deliverance from sin, is certainly according to GOD's will; neither do we say anything about the way in which this advance or deliverance is to be brought to pass—that we leave to GOD also.

The second kind of prayer, I said, was *petition:* that is, making request for some particular thing. And this will for the most part be the subject of private prayer: "the heart knoweth his own bitterness." And this, dearest Sisters, is why I always feel it a privilege, immediately after I have heard any of your confessions, to pray with you, not according to any set form of words, but according to that which you seem to me at the time most to need—at the time when, so far as one person can read another's heart, all your most hidden fears and hopes are open to me. Only, on this head, we must always take notice, that it must be limited, "so far as it be

according to God's will." If it be for an earthly good, or for what we think so, of course it must. But even when it is for a spiritual blessing, it may not be expedient for us to have it exactly at that time or precisely in that way; and then also we must leave it in these respects to Him Who knows our needs better than we do. Only then here is the difficulty. We know that it is easy enough to *say*, "if it be Thy will: nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done;" but it is so difficult not to have a secret feeling at the bottom of all—Nevertheless I *do* wish it, whether it be God's will or not. There we have especial cause to be strict with ourselves. But then I have known persons—very true servants of God—who have done what I can only call *worrying* themselves about this. When you say, "Not my will, but Thine be done," this does not hinder your wishing—your wishing earnestly—that it *may* be God's will. All it means is this: If an Angel were to reveal to you at the moment—this is not God's will, but you may have it if you choose: would you take it or not? If you can feel sure you would *not*, then all the rest is right; pray as earnestly as you like or can, and there is no sin. I have often found this question, which seems so simple, satisfy persons. But if you do not, in such a case, know what you would say, or *do* know that, whatever God's

will might be, you would still gripe and grasp at what you now desire,—then, never pray for what you want, till, by prayer, you have brought your mind into that submission.

With this caution, I am quite sure that we do not pray for particular blessings as earnestly as we might. I am sure we do not attach sufficient weight to our dear LORD's words, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;" or again, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place: and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you;" or again, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." We do not take it sufficiently in its literal sense—in the meaning in which we should take the similar promise of an earthly friend: and yet, remember, how often some of you have prayed earnestly for a temporal blessing, and have been heard, I will not say supernaturally, but most remarkably? When money has been necessary for the House, you have prayed for it, and marvellously it has come. Believe me, first convincing yourselves that you would not accept it if against GOD's will, you do not pray half hard enough for things of this kind: or for deliverance from spiritual troubles.

Well, but: may we pray for miracles?

First,—believe that we all have the power of working miracles. If I had faith enough, and a holy life answering, I could say to our dear Sister here, whom GOD has been pleased so sadly to try,[1] "In the Name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD, be whole of thy disease." So could you: and she would be, on the instant, healed.

But, on the other hand, we must remember that the power of working miracles in the Church very much depends on Her unity. Thus, till the year 1054, in which most miserable year was the Great Schism between East and West, miracles were very much more common than after it. Since the great schism at the Reformation, they are rarer still, though there have been miracles both in the Roman and English Churches. Therefore we have a great preliminary difficulty to contend with. And again, remember how holy must be our lives, how intense our prayers, how rigorous our fasting, to render this thing possible. Therefore I should not venture to advise any one to pray for a miracle; because, if they failed, instead of attributing it to the right causes, their faith might be shaken. But, if any one felt a vocation to pray for it, GOD forbid I should gainsay! I have known one decided and unmistakeable miracle in the English Church,—

[1] She was dying of cancer in the face.

and if I should see another, GOD's Holy Name be the more blessed!

We have only got on to the second kind of Prayer, *Petition*,—and that also has three divisions. But I will not now go into them, but rather leave them for another time. Only, my Sisters, remember this—what earnest prayer your every-day life needs, only to support it—only to keep it up—only to live up to its average. If you wilfully, or needlessly, fail in prayer, how can you wonder if GOD should leave you to yourselves? Never fall into the mistake that the same amount of prayer which will enable others to lead an ordinary Christian life will enable you to lead a holy Religious life. It will not; indeed it will not. The whole standard is raised: the prayer must be lengthened and heightened and strengthened too. I think you *do* know this: I trust you do feel it; but you must practise it more and more. Sisters,—those who are nearest their King here, those who are to be most His there, whose all in all He is and must be,—is it not more especially of them that it is written, *they* "ought always to pray, and not to faint?"

And now, &c.

[The series of which this was to have been the first sermon, was never continued.]

SERMON XXXIV.[1]

Friday after the Eighth and Fourteenth Sundays after Trinity.

THE RUINED CITY REBUILT.

"And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast which was under me to pass."—Nehemiah ii. 13, 14.

I DO not think that, in the whole Bible, there is a more beautiful type of our dear LORD's dealings, than Nehemiah's midnight visit to Jerusalem. One can imagine those glorious ruins of white marble, which once had been the Temple; the deep ravines of Kedron, and of the valley of the son of Hinnom, in all the contrast of light and shade that a tropical moon so wonderfully brings out. Then the intense stillness of the once populous city: the feeling that with so little help, so many discouragements, such weak friends, such strong enemies, the work had to be done: these ruins

[1] August 19, and September 30, 1860.

removed, these walls rebuilt; the place, over which a fox now could pass, fortified against the attack of the strongest enemy. That was the business of Nehemiah, as yet a stranger in a strange land: knowing only that the task had to be done, utterly ignorant how it was to be done: and here you have his first ride through the city.

And even so, did not the Truer Nehemiah, our Blessed LORD Himself, come down to the restoration of His beautiful work on earth,—the temple He had made for Himself: "GOD created man in His Own Image; in the Image of GOD created He him." And it was indeed by night He came; what darkness, after the light of Heaven: what silence, after the songs of Paradise! He came, determined again to rear up a better, a more beautiful, a stronger Jerusalem: to rear that Holy Church wherewith He was to be alway, even to the end of the world. And He did view it too, in those wonderful thirty years that elapsed before He began His public ministrations. That was the time which, as it were, He gave to studying this ruin: and then, the three last years of His suffering life on earth, were employed to this end, to the raising it up again.

Now, I might dwell all the evening on that interpretation of the text: but I am going to

make it something closer and more personal to you. Only thus much: what is the meaning of the saying: "There was no room for the beast that was under Me to pass?" You can tell for yourselves. When our dear LORD entered Jerusalem, meek, and riding on an ass, that animal, accustomed to the yoke, set forth the Jewish people, just as the colt, the offspring of the ass, and that had never felt the bridle, was the Gentile Church, the daughter of the Jewish Communion, and, up to that time, accustomed to no laws. "There was no room for the beast that was under Me to pass." No: the Jews refused to take part in the new and holier and better city, the Sion of the Church: and therefore, as the Apostle said, "Seeing ye account yourselves unworthy of the grace of GOD, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

But now, my Sisters, I want in Nehemiah to see a type of you, and it may be in two ways. You know how completely the Religious Life, twenty years ago, was a ruin. Scarcely more in our Church than abroad. Everywhere the same. The spirit was lost; the outward laws and ritual were almost forgotten; even on the Continent earnest men regarded vows and asceticism as things of the past. "Son of man, can these dry bones live? And I said, LORD, Thou knowest."

That ruin, dearest Sisters, you, in common with others, are seeking to repair. In a certain sense, GOD has prospered us all beyond anything that we had a right to hope. But what I want you more and more to see is,—*if* you hope thus to do Him service, if you hope to be builders in the erection of this Jerusalem, it is a most miserable self-deceit—it is a wretched sham—unless yourselves are living the holiest of lives. Your many temptations: do you think that, on the whole, you are resisting them as those ought to do, who expect that GOD will in a most especial manner, in a way not far short of miraculous, acknowledge them, and accept the work of their hands? Do you think that to look for that kind of help requires moderate goodness, tolerable self-denial, average effort? Oh, most wretchedly you deceive yourselves! Ask herself, each of you, "If I were leading the highest life that to me is possible—that to me I allow to be possible—what should I be doing at this time that I am not doing? what should I be giving up that I am doing?" Suppose that I were to say, before our Celebration to-morrow: "Each of you, who feels that in any one given point she is allowing herself to lead a lower life than she knows a Sister ought to lead, each *such* one shall not receive," is there one of you who could receive? (I am *not* going to tell you any such thing: but

suppose I did; what then?) Now that is the right and true way of looking at the matter. For, if you can feel these short-comings, what must He, Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, think of them? What must He think of thousands of faults which you, perhaps, lay little to heart?

Ah! and how beautifully that is said in the text, "There was no room for the beast which was under me to pass." You may, you, your better selves, you, your true Sister-parts, may go forward in the work of the LORD, but there is no room in that work for any pet sin, any accustomed weakness, any usual giving way to temptation. Give up that, or give up the work. Oh my Sisters! what you all might be if you would! what you might be if GOD gave me the power of so touching your hearts as He gave His Saints of old time! what you might be if I so had His grace that the very seeing it in me would make you determine to practise it in yourselves! Of all wishes, hopes, prayers, that I have or could form, next to my own salvation, this is the chief, that I should see you daily building up the ruin of the Religious Life in this place; daily less satisfied with anything you have hitherto done; daily more resolved to do more, to fight more valiantly, to succeed more thoroughly for the future! You! with the LAMB of GOD, the source of all

strength so perpetually on your altars, to be weak! you, so receiving that unconquerable Body and Blood as no other women in this country do, to shrink back! I *never* have to complain of you while you are working in the hardships and miseries of external labour. There, again and again I have had occasion to glorify God's grace. Then why, when you are at home, do I see so many short-comings! Then why, when the means of grace are more plentiful, are the works of grace less striking?

But all this leads us to the other mystical interpretation of the text. Let us take the ruin, no longer of the ruined and almost destroyed Religious Life, but of that ruin of God's Image in each of your hearts, ruined by original sin, to be built up by the continual indwelling and inworking of the Holy Ghost. Here also, "There was no room for the beast which was under me to pass." Nothing that defiles, nothing that embitters, nothing that troubles, can remain in the carrying on that work. Remember what it is. Here, when the grace of God is first given you, you find yourself, as it were, in possession of a ruin which you have to put into such a state as may be fit for the reception of the Bridegroom when He comes. It is a building for eternity; and how far are you engaged in it? How far do you contentedly allow this or that part still to remain

a ruin? How far do you suffer this temper, that self-indulgence, this carelessness, that piece of idleness, to stand in the way of the perfect building?

O my Sisters, you ought each to say, for yourself, what GOD knows I say for you all when I look at the rise and progress of this Religious House. "The House which I am about to build shall be wonderful great." But what can I do, unless you each work for yourselves? What can be the holiness of the Sisterhood, unless there be the holiness of each Sister? What can be the love, the courage, the energy, the diligence, the self-denial, the purity of that, unless each of those graces be shown in each?

"There was no room for the beast which was under me to pass." Why then, whatever be the trouble, the pain, the struggle, these low, degrading temptations, these miserable feelings of anger and pride, and self-indulgence, must be left behind us. Oh how slowly and gradually they creep on us! Cassian, in his history of the hermits, (he wrote about 420 years after our LORD,) tells us of one very holy man in France, who was thought the truest servant of GOD among all the ascetics of that neighbourhood, who performed countless miracles, and for whom one wonder, not so unusual at that time, was daily performed. The ravens brought him

bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. By degrees Satan suggested to him, "Having done so much, why labour more? Having secured your salvation, why endeavour to make it more certain?" Ah! one cannot stand still! The Angels of GOD, if not ascending on the Heavenly ladder, were descending: none were stationary. Gradually, he began prayer later and left it off earlier. He slept earlier, woke later: he fasted less, he meditated less. When lo! the bread he received every day, instead of being, as it used to be, excellent and fresh, become old and mouldy. He was warned, but he would not repent. Laxer and laxer, more and more idle he became; and now his bread was, as it were, gnawed by animals, and scarcely fit for food. At last he determined to leave the wilderness, and take his ease. He passed by a monastery on his way to the next city, and was housed there for the night. The Abbat, having heard of his fame, requested him to preach to the brothers; above all things, said the holy man, against a reputation and a name to live when we are dead. He did so: and even as he was preaching, the thought came into his mind as with a flash of lightning, "'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.' I to preach against hypocrisy, myself such a hypocrite!" He re-

turned to his solitude; with earnest prayers and tears asked for forgiveness, and doubtless obtained it; for he there lived and died the true servant of God. But now for the future he had to eat bread in the sweat of his brow: henceforth no miraculous help was ministered to him.

And now then: shall we resolve once more for the future? We are never to be weary of that; never despondent, never discouraged, because we have failed. No: we shall not always fail: you do not always fail: and try now. More than one of you know that there are particular things at this moment that I wish you to try about. Dearest Sisters, this night, let your Husband's voice prevail. You know what He says; you know what He desires. As you hope to live with Him: as you hope for that unspeakable blessedness: that perfect union and loneliness, if I may use the expression, loneliness of such dear oneness with Him: try now! He can help you: He will help you: and having helped you now, oh that He may lead you, and all of you, day by day, night by night, nearer to Him till you shall be His entirely, only, eternally, beatifically!

And now, &c.

SERMON XXXV.

THE EQUAL SHARE.

"For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff, they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."—1 Sam. xxx. 24, 25.

A NOBLE law indeed, one that seems a type and a foretaste of the Communion of Saints. Those that go forth to the battle, those that stay in the camp, to share alike. David, we read here, made it a statute and an ordinance thenceforward in Israel. But had it never been made before? Surely it had. Thus GOD had ordained in the Book of Numbers: "Divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and before all the congregation." Then, if more than four hundred years ago this had been made a law, why is it here said to have been enacted by David? No doubt, because it had gone so much against the grain of a warlike people, that it had dropped

into disuse. What! those who remain safe at home, who slumber while others watch, who are in security while others peril their lives, in warmth while others shiver in the frosty night air, who have enough and to spare, while others fast, these to have the same reward at last? Above all, a reward not won in any way by themselves, but by the death of some of their brethren, by the blood of others, the jeopardy of more, the fatigue of all? Even so.

Now, my Sisters, this is your own text, is it not? You learn this from it; that you remaining here at home, have an equal right to the spoil with those that go out to war. How? That the sacrifice which they send up, and which our Great High Priest mingles with His Own, and offers on that Golden Altar, you share in; you have as much a right to it as they; you have and will have as great a reward from it as they. Yes, this is so indeed; but on certain conditions. And what are they? What we may learn from the same text.

Firstly, why did not these two hundred go over the brook? Because they *would* not? No, because they *could* not. They were so faint they could not go over the brook Besor. That is exactly the case with some of you. But if it were not; if you were merely detained at home because other duties were given you here, and you

took those duties because they were given you; it would be the same thing.

But now, to speak of illness. All ascetic writers say with one voice, that Sisters must always expect much of it. Why? For the old reason; the old teaching of S. Paul, "Whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth." You profess to love Him more than others do; well, then it follows that He loves you more than He loves others. And then come your consequent trials, sickness first and chief; and then come the difficulties out of these trials.

Now, one of those difficulties is, the amount of fatigue which you are able to bear in coming into the Oratory. In the times of persecution of the Church in Holland, there was a Priest of the name of Cousebant, a most holy man, who had the charge of one of the largest Sisterhoods in that country, at Amsterdam. He is said to have been the best director for women devoted to the Religious Life whom that century knew; so loving, so wise, so self-denying, so firm, so prudent. It happened that one day, some stranger Priest assisted at Mass in the chapel of this Religious House, and afterwards expressed his astonishment that, out of so many, so few were present. "Do you not warn them to come?" said he. "Not unless they confess unwillingness," was the reply. "Not unless!

In the name of Christian charity, why not?" "If," answered the good old Priest, "the love of a Bride of CHRIST is so cold that she allows a trifling indisposition to keep her from His service and does not know her absence to be a sin, GOD have mercy upon her. I may tell the wife that she is bound to love her husband; but can I warn her, (if that love does not of itself,) to listen to his horse-hoof up the avenue, to his footfall on the stairs, to his hand on the latchet? Can *I* send her bounding into his arms, can I bid her throw her arm round his neck, can I teach her how to give and receive the kiss of wedded love?"

Thus, my Sisters, I have always endeavoured to act with regard to you; thus I always will. If you tell me, in that most holy tribunal, of your own free accord, that you are tempted to permit bodily weakness to keep you back from Him Whom you ought to love best, then, of course, I speak to you of that difficulty, counsel you about it, pray with you about it. But, when you do not confess it, I never suspect you of it. I could not. "The love of CHRIST constraineth us." If I see any place vacant, GOD knows I pray for its occupant from my heart, not as unwilling, but as unable to come. Oh how bitterly ought that miserable Sister to be ashamed, (I do not believe there is such an one, GOD knows,

but *if* there were, oh how bitterly ought that miserable Sister to be ashamed,) whom her LORD sees to be neglecting Him because she is idle and self-indulgent, while her Priest is interceding for her because she is incapable and prevented!

But, as I said, I am persuaded better things of you. Faults you all have, far, far unworthy of a Sister; but unwillingness to come into that dear LORD's Presence, I do not for a moment believe to be one. I rather am apt to think that you are sometimes worshipping Him here in this Oratory, when you ought to be taking the rest which is to fit you hereafter for His service.

For that will be a conflict of duties; only remember, that it is not peculiar to you here at home. Out too, it will occur. Did any Sister ever return without feeling anxious lest she should have neglected, in her care for her patient, visible and external prayer? Answer, you that have tried for yourselves. Kneeling down? Out of the question. A set time for devotion? Out of the question. You could only have the lifting up of the heart—the arrow, like Joash's, of the LORD's deliverance—sent up at any odd moment, to heaven; time did not admit of more. I know it. But I know also of that feeling: "At such a time I had so many hours' sleep. I might have knelt in prayer. I did not. I lay down at once. Is that living in the spirit of prayer?"

Yes, a thousand times I say, yes, it may be. She that works, the proverb says, prays. So you see, the difficulty is the same: you here, sometimes perhaps not knowing whether you really are able to join us in the Oratory or not; they, not knowing whether they ought to have a fixed season for prayer, or not.

And then again notice; these soldiers at home were watching by the stuff. They were fulfilling their part in the duties of the army. Others were winning new conquests; they were making good what had been already gained; and oh that it might be so with you! They at a distance, prospering in a new work; you, establishing and confirming the old. You know the thing would be impossible, that all should together be out, and engaged in the active service of God. There would be no golden chain to bind together past and present and future as there is now, if, at intervals, the whole of you were engaged in active business, and the Daily Hours were dropped; if there were gaps and intervals in their employment; if, when you came back again here, the "Work of God," as they called it in primitive times, the work of God in the Oratory had to be taken up afresh, the fire on the Altar re-kindled, instead of never going out. That is not written to the honour of the age, which we read in the beginning of the first book of Samuel: "Ere the

lamp of GOD went out in the temple of the LORD." No, believe me, your work here, in keeping up these services, is as needful as that of your Sisters at a distance. If they are like Joshua fighting with Amalek, you ought to be like Moses, pleading on the mount.

You have, of course, your own difficulties and temptations. Naturally you are tempted, because you cannot do all that you would, to slur over what you can. Peter of Blois, preaching on this very subject to a Religious House, and setting forth the advantages of weakness and sickness to the followers of Him Who Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses, says: "But the more profit, the more danger; the more such a trial offers with one hand, the more it threatens with the other. If, O thou that oughtest to be the messenger of GOD, that oughtest to lead us nearer to the Cross, that oughtest to be our closest guide to Gethsemane, if thou, neglecting thy commission shalt cause us to think more of ourselves, and less of Him, shalt cause us to be self-indulgent, instead of self-denying, indolent instead of watchful, then, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me.'"

So, you see, in all points they were tempted then, as we are now. That old adversary may now and then invent a new weapon, may sometimes furbish up an old one, but, on the whole,

he betakes himself to the old armoury, and employs the old method of assault. And ours, dear Sisters, is the Old Armoury too; it stands on the same hill where it ever stood, namely on Mount Calvary; it is marked to be proof by the same Blood of the same dear LORD, Who conquered and Who died in it. Yes, truly, of any other methods of resistance you would soon say as David did before the fight with Goliath, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." And GOD grant, my Sisters, that the old armour may lead to the old result, the old victory, the reward passed down from one generation to another of Christian warriors: "That ye may sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My FATHER, in His Throne."

And now, &c.

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Neale, Rev. J. M.

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